

THE
A B B E Y
OF
C L U G N Y.
A N O V E L.

BY MRS. MEEKE,

AUTHOR OF
COUNT ST. BLANCARD.

IN THREE VOLUMES,

VOL. I.

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THE
ABBAY OF CLUGNY.

CHAP. I.

BETWEEN Douai and Lisle, in one of the finest parts of French Flanders, is a small village, called Pont a Marque, where travellers, who ran post, were obliged to change horses; as 'twas a rule never to pass a post-house; and the stages or posts were formerly fixed and regulated by government. This was nearly the only convenience this place afforded.—A miserable hut, dignified by the name of an inn, was very ill calculated to accommodate people who might chance to be too late for the gates of either Lisle or

Douai, which often happened ; and the gates of a frontier town were never opened after once the keys were carried to the commandant, and the bridges were drawn up.

In the year 1770, the curate of this village was, in the general acceptance of the term, a very good man. His house was very pleasantly situated near the entrance from Lisle. It consisted of three rooms upon the ground floor, besides the kitchen, and an equal number over them, was inclosed within a high wall ; had a small court in front, and a good garden behind. This worthy priest enjoyed all the comforts, and many of the luxuries this world affords. He was beloved by his parishioners, which arose more from his easy temper, and mild insinuating address, than from his charitable disposition. However, if he dealt out his alms with a very sparing hand, the poorest might always command his advice, though he was never known either to christen, bury, or marry, without exacting the established fees ; and he never failed,
when



when any of his parishioners were dying, to exhort them to found masses, for the benefit of their souls, or to purchase different ornaments for the church.

A maiden lady, between thirty and forty, superintended his household.—She was his first cousin, and was perfectly calculated for the important post she held, being a much more rigid economist than Monsieur de Bauve himself. Whether they were as nearly related as they gave the world to understand, must remain a matter of doubt: For as these gentlemens' profession precludes them from marrying, they usually fix upon some female relation to take care of their family; sometimes a handsome cousin; or if they prefer the gaiety of youth, an elegant niece. Sisters are generally excluded from their domestic arrangements, and smart house-keepers might scandalize their neighbours.

Mademoiselle Vernet thought 'twas possible she might survive her cousin; and not having an independent fortune of her own, found it doubly incumbent to lay by a trifle, in case such an event took place: This reflection added greatly to her frugality; a female servant, named Therese, a stout short Flemish peasant, completed their household.

One evening, in the middle of November, which is as dreary a month in Flanders as 'tis in England (and this had been a remarkable bad day; the rain had been continually accompanied by a heavy fog), the curate and his cousin were just sat down to supper—a fine piece of a-la-mode beef smoked upon their board, which was a very favourite dish of Mademoiselle Vernet's, and the priest having said grace very devoutly, was just beginning to carve, when a violent knocking at the outward gate disturbed them very unpleasantly.—The curate frowned, and Mademoiselle said,

“ Mercy

“Mercy upon me, how tiresome; who can this be at such a time of night.”

Therese, who was just returning from the cellar with a jug of Flemish ale, called out “patience.”—Then turning to her master, said,

“I dare say ’tis that old fat landlady has sent.—She is worse than she was, I suppose. Pray what must I say, Sir? For ten to one she wants the sacrament, and so thought to catch you before you went to bed.”

“I wish, with all my soul, people would know their own minds,” said the curate very peevishly.—I paid her a visit this morning, and may say I went out chiefly upon her account in such horrid weather, and I made use of every argument I could think of to convince her of her danger, and to induce her to confess herself; but if the woman had been a heretick, she could not have been more obstinate.—Now I suppose she finds she is going in good earnest, and so I am to be deranged from my supper, to quiet her conscience; let them knock again.”

“ ’Tis very possibly another beggarly traveller,” said Mademoiselle Vernet, “ who wants a lodging for the love of God ; so I think cousin, Therese had better tell them at once you are not at home ; but perhaps they won’t knock any more.”

At that instant, a louder peal than the former assailed their ears ; and the curate, thinking they seemed inclined to knock his door down, if they did not gain admittance, desired Therese to go and see what they wanted, but on no account to let them come within the court, and to send them away, if possible.

Therese hurried through the court, and opened the gate—looked upon the road.—She had a light in her hand, which she held up to take a survey of this unwelcome intruder, and beheld a servant in a very rich livery, who instantly said,

“ I thought you were all gone to bed, and fast asleep.—Is your master at home ?”

Therese, who had gone to the gate, prepared to send the person she expected to find there about their business was now both astonished

nished and confused.—She dropt one of her best courtseys, while she said, with a smile, “Yes, Sir.”—The servant turned from her, and she advanced into the road, and saw him approach a very handsome carriage and fix, that was standing within a few paces of the gate.—This increased her surprise, particularly when she perceived a gentleman put his head out, and heard him say,

“I will alight, Francois; I shall be better able to explain to Mr. de Bauve why we have disturbed him; my old friend will most likely have forgot me.”

Another servant, in the same livery, who was standing close to the door of the carriage, opened it, and a gentleman, much about the curate’s age, that is, between forty and fifty, stepped out.—He was handsomely dressed as an Abbé.—He just said,

“I won’t be ten minutes, my Lord.”—Addressing his travelling companion, and advanced towards Therese, saying, “now, my good girl, shew me the way in.”

Therese was rather at a loss how to act, but thought she would shew the stranger into one of the rooms to the left, while she called her master; for she neither dare refuse such a man admittance, nor inquire his business; but at the entrance into the house, she was relieved from her anxiety, by the appearance of the curate and his cousin, who were both impatient to know whether they should be allowed to finish their meal in peace, and what detained their maid so long; but the sight of her companion astonished them excessively, and before they were able to express their surprise, or to inquire what had procured them the honour of this visit; for the Abbé's appearance convinced them he was very much their superior.—He thus addressed them, after bowing very politely to both.

“I ought to apologize for the disturbance I am afraid we have occasioned; but your profession, Sir, and the slight recollection I thought I had of your name, induced me to take this liberty; convinced, if you were the
Abbé

Abbé de Bauve I was formerly acquainted with, my motives would prove a sufficient excuse. I am travelling to Paris, with the only son and heir of the Duke de Longueville; and the young gentleman is far from well—he having lately quitted some very dear friends, and has experienced a very extraordinary revolution in his situation; to-day, you know, has not been propitious for travelling, and the damp and fog has increased the depression already preyed upon his mind.—In short, he is now very indifferent, and I am fearful of the consequences, were we to proceed any farther to night.—We left Bruxelles early this morning, intending to reach Lisle this evening, but the bad roads, horrid weather, and some trifling accidents, have prevented us from accomplishing our design; for you know the impossibility of getting into Lisle now, had I no other reason to induce me to stop here.—At the post-house, which don't lodge travellers, we were informed we should meet with very tolerable accommodations at an inn a

little farther on ; we drove there, but found the only room fit to put a decent person into was occupied by the landlady, who is very ill: I therefore inquired whether there was any other house, where 'twas possible we might procure a lodging for the night.—The landlord mentioned you, Mr. de Bauve, as the only person likely to take us in ; and if you can accommodate the Marquis de St. Cernin for one night only, 'twill really be an act of humanity, besides laying the Duke de Longueville under a very great obligation, which he won't fail to acknowledge."

The curate was too much taken up just then with the idea of entertaining so noble a guest, to inquire how the Abbé came to recollect his name, or where and when he had formerly known him ; and he did not remember his face—but he perfectly understood his last hint, and his cousin was blest with equal penetration ; therefore each began to display their hospitalities, having quite forgot the poor man who had so unsuccessfully put it to the trial only a few hours before ;

before; but the present application afforded them an excellent opportunity of displaying their fine feelings; the Abbé could not have done them a greater favour, they assured him; were only excessively sorry their house was so small, and the accommodations so mean for a nobleman of the Marquis's rank, but every thing should be made as comfortable as laid in their power; and they might have been worse off, in point of provisions, Mademoiselle Vernet said, for very fortunately they had got a fine piece of a-la-mode beef just ready, a delicacy they never allowed themselves above twice a year, and she would put the two best beds in order with her own hands; they were thoroughly aired, as she always slept in the one, and her cousin in the other.

The Abbé said, she was very obliging;— he merely wished the Marquis to have a good bed, but begged he might not derange any body upon his own account; he was a man of the world, and guessed pretty well to what

they owed this amazing politeness, but intreated they would not make themselves uneasy about what their house afforded; the Marquis would most likely not chuse to eat much supper; a basin of soup, if they happened to have any, would be the greatest treat they could offer him.—They were never without it, Mademoiselle said, and she would challenge all Pont a Marque to equal her in that article; for she always attended to the cooking herself.—As the Abbé saw he had afforded her an inexhaustible theme, he said, with their permission, he would inform his Lordship of the hospitable reception he was likely to meet with, as the sooner he was in bed the better.—Very true, both the cousins said; and Mademoiselle ordered Therese to bring more lights, and to shake up the cushion in her master's large arm chair, for the Marquis to sit in, while his bed was getting ready. Therese, equally eager to display her zeal, soon returned with a couple more candles, and they all advanced towards the carriage, the curate and his cousin anticipating

ing every step they took, the great advantages likely to arise from this unexpected visit. The Abbé ordered one of the servants to open the door of the carriage; he then informed the Marquis how successful he had been, and entreated he would allow him to assist him in alighting; the curate approached at the same moment, and begged his Lordship would do him the honour to lean upon his shoulder, putting himself in a proper attitude for that purpose. Mademoiselle Vernet stood at some distance, expressing her sorrow for his Lordship's unfortunate illness, and courtesying between every word. The person upon whom all these marks of respect and attention were lavished, paid very little attention to them; he merely made use of the Abbé's arm to alight, to the great mortification of the curate; but this slight, which arose from inattention on the Marquis's side, by no means diminished the priest's politeness, who now fervently joined the Abbé in inquiring how his Lordship found himself.—The Marquis said, he should
be

be very well as soon as he was in bed, and only entreated he might not put them out of their way; was afraid his late arrival had greatly deranged them; his Lordship had done them the greatest honour; had it been midnight, they should have been happy to receive him.—During this profusion of compliments, the Marquis advanced into the house, leaning upon the Abbé's arm, and felt rather hurt than gratified by the servile civility of the two cousins, convinced it was a mere tribute paid to his rank.—There was a very good fire in the eating parlour, which was to the right of the entrance: The arm-chair, which had been put in proper order, was placed near it; so his Lordship took possession of it, and the Abbé ordered the servants to return to the inn with the carriage, and to make the best shift they could.

Thereſe was deſired to remove the ſupper table, and to keep the beef warm, while Mademoiſelle Vernet went to heat ſome ſoup, convinced ſo great a man would know
how

how to appreciate such a mark of attention. She had hardly left the room, before the curate begged his noble guest would excuse him for a few moments, hastening away before he had received the permission he solicited, and soon returned, almost breathless, from the haste he had made, with a couple of bottles of his best Burgundy, in hopes of tempting the invalid to taste it, as he looked upon good wine as a sovereign remedy in all disorders.—In short, his wine and soup were held in such high estimation in the village, that when one or both failed of completing a cure, the patient was given up as past recovery, for coming through this pious man's hands, certainly added to their virtue: Besides, his fervent prayers greatly accelerated their effects.

He modestly hinted all this to the Marquis; but his Lordship had not so large a stock of faith as the good man's parishioners had.—Besides, his complaint originated in grief, and a severe disappointment he had just met

met with ; therefore he resisted, though very politely, all the curate's pressing entreaties, to taste this famous cordial, and the Abbé was cruel enough not to join in the good man's pious request, and even said, the soup and a warm bed would be of much more service to the Marquis.—This quite silenced the curate, who had sense enough to know he might offend, and would probably expose his own ignorance, if he said any more ; so he took his seat by the fire, saying, he was sure his cousin would get every thing ready as speedily as possible.—He now reflected upon the Abbé's having said he had recollected his name ; so after looking at him very hard, without being able to trace a single feature he knew, he began to ask him at what seminary he prosecuted his studies, and whether he was a native of Flanders.—The Abbé, who understood what he meant, said he would satisfy him by and bye, looking at the Marquis while he spoke ; though the young Lord was so deeply absorbed in his own reflections, he did not pay the least attention to
their

their discourse; therefore they might have spoke with as much freedom as if he had not been present.

In less than half an hour, Mademoiselle Vernet came in, and informed the Marquis the room was ready; there was an excellent fire, and the soup was warm; therefore would he chuse to take it before or after he got into bed.—At the Abbé's request, he eat it in the parlour, and was so prest both by the curate and his cousin, to give his opinion of this excellent composition, that he was obliged to say 'twas very good; and the curate ventured to say, a glass of Burgundy was a very good thing after it; but no notice was taken either by the Marquis or the Abbé, as they both rose at the same moment, and begged to be shewn into the bed-room.—The curate and his cousin both chose to attend their illustrious visitor.—The first room, on the other side of the passage, was the best apartment, and was allotted for him to repose in.—There he was still warming the bed;
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the one through it was prepared for the Abbé, that he might be within call, if his Lordship wanted any thing in the night.— The cousins now began to make a thousand apologies, where none were required, as the apartments were very neat, and positively handsomely furnished; but the Abbé, who began to be as sick of their over politeness as his young companion was, gave them to understand, as soon as their volubility afforded him an opportunity, that his Lordship would wish to be left alone; so they took their leave, after the curate had offered up a prayer for the Marquis's speedy recovery; and Mademoiselle Vernet had made an offer to sit up in his Lordship's room, if 'twould be agreeable, or she could be of any service;— this was of course declined, and they left the apartment, hoping Monsieur l'Abbé would bring out his Lordship's further orders.

The Abbé saw the Marquis into bed; told him he should bring him another basin of the curate's excellent soup before he retired himself,

himself, and only hoped he would not give way to melancholy reflections, which would only increase his disorder.

The priest then joined the two cousins, who were calculating the great benefits that were likely to arise from this distinguished visit.—The curate was already an arch-deacon in his own imagination, and thought 'twas very probable he might attain a mitre: The Abbé's entrance broke the thread of his agreeable reflections; the table was ordered to be laid, and supper set out once more.—The curate and his cousin were terribly shocked, they had nothing better to offer Monsieur l'Abbé, but hoped he would be able to make shift for one night.—It even seemed a stroke of Providence, they were thus well provided for; and his wine the curate knew to be excellent; he had only a few bottles of it left; it had been made him a present of by the lord of the manor about three months before, and he had never opened one upon his own account.

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The Abbé affected to give him credit for all he said, saying, he wanted no farther proofs to convince him of his hospitality and charitable disposition; the beef was soon put upon table, and they all three made a very hearty meal: They then each drank a glass of this excellent wine, to the speedy recovery of the noble invalid; and Mademoiselle, who possess'd a considerable share of curiosity, said she never saw so young a gentleman look so melancholy.—The curate said he had made the same remark, and had wondered what could disturb the peace of so great a man, who had it in his power to gratify every desire he could form.

“Not absolutely, my good friend,” said the Abbé; “the Marquis is not his own master yet; he may form wishes, which can only be gratified by his father’s consent, and may not be sure of obtaining his permission to follow the dictates of his heart.”

“Very true, Monsieur l’Abbe,” said Mademoiselle; “I suppose the Marquis is in love?”

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The Abbé smiled, and the curate, pouring out another bumper of wine, said he must trouble the Abbé to refresh his memory; he thought he recollected his features the moment he saw him, but had not been able to remember where their acquaintance had commenced.

“ I was educated at Douai, my good friend,” said the Abbé, “ and my name is de Mondevergues.”

The curate started from his chair, exclaiming, “ Oh! my dearest and best of friends, but for your noble and generous behaviour, I should have been ——.”

The Abbé immediately interrupted the curate, gave him a very kind embrace, and said, they would talk over their school pranks another time.—The curate was not sorry for this hint; whatever it might have been rushed so suddenly into his mind, he had hitherto kept it a secret from his cousin;—therefore, ’tis to be presumed he would not have derived much honour from the communication, as he seemed excessively confused,

fused, when he reflected he had nearly discovered it.—The Abbé saw the effect his embarrassment had upon Mademoiselle; he therefore began to expatiate, in a gay tone, upon his friend's great propensity to mischief, while a youth, which often brought him into disgrace with the rigid masters of the seminary they were both inhabitants of.—This put Mademoiselle into good humour again, and her curiosity having been merely awakened by the hints the Abbé had dropped, respecting the Marquis's disorder, she said, by way of renewing the inquiry, the young lord did not seem such a wild youth as by all accounts her cousin had been; but she really thought his present illness was brought on by fretting.

“In a great measure, Mademoiselle,” said the Abbé.

“Bless me,” said the curate, “if I was not afraid of being indiscreet, my dear friend, I should be tempted to inquire into the origin of his Lordship's disorder.—At all events you may depend upon every communication
you

you chuse to favour us with, remaining a profound secret."

"There certainly is something very singular in the Marquis's case," said the Abbé; "and as his story will very soon be made quite public, I see no reason that should prevent me from gratifying your curiosity."

The curate instantly drew the second cork, begging to have the honour of drinking one more glass of wine with him before he favoured him and his cousin with this recital. The Abbé was fond of good wine as well as the curate, but having finished his glass, he thus began:

"I dare say you will be surprised when I inform you the Duke de Longueville, and the Marquis de St. Cernin, are total strangers to each other."

"Goodness!" said Mademoiselle, "is that possible—Father and son, and not know each other! How wonderful!"

"Why this is the most extraordinary thing I ever heard of," said the curate, "and I am very anxious to know more."

“ Then listen my old friend,” said the Abbé, “ and I will explain this seeming mystery to you in as few words as possible.”

“ We had better have one more glass first,” said the curate, which was as readily agreed to by the Abbé, who then began his narrative, in the following terms :

“ The Duke de Longueville married, about two and twenty years ago, the only daughter and heiress of the Duke de Mercœur, which was a very great match for him, as his grace was not rich, though one of the first noblemen this country can boast of ;—but by what I have learnt at different times, it was not a match of inclination on the lady’s side ; however, her father did not allow her to make any objections ; his will was law ;—and she knew the consequence of disobedience.

“ At the end of seven months, owing to a fall, the Duchefs laid in of the young nobleman, now in your house.—His birth, as he seemed very likely to live, occasioned great rejoicings in the family, particularly as the Duke

Duke de Mercoeur had settled great part of his vast property.—Indeed, every thing he could alienate from his title upon his daughter and her heir, independent of her husband.—The accident, which occasioned the Duchess's premature labour, happened at Paris; but as the air of the capital is not thought healthy for infants in general, and the Marquis, owing to his early birth, was rather puny and weak for some time; by the advice of the faculty, he was sent out to be nursed at a fine seat the Duke has on the other side of Fountainbleau, and about a twelvemonth afterwards, the Duchess laid in of a second son, which she went her full time with.—She laid in at Paris, as before, and the young stranger was to have been brought up at the same seat where his brother had resided from his birth; but during the Duchess's confinement, a villain, who has since confessed his crime, a very distant relation of the Duke de Mercoeur's, and who once had hopes of becoming his son-in-law, found means to carry off the present Mar-

quis, and laid his horrid plan so well, that 'twas impossible to trace the road he had taken; nor could the servants discover how he had contrived to come at the child.—

However, as every means they took to recover so precious a charge, and all their inquiries proved fruitless, the horrid news was dispatched express to Paris, and broke so abruptly to the Ducheſs, who had by no means recovered from her second laying-in, that the shock proved too much for her;— ſhe took to her bed immediately, and a few days terminated the exiſtence of one of the moſt amiable women in the world.

“ The Dukes de Languetille and Mercœur were inſolable for this double loſs. They both offered the greateſt rewards for this loſt child; but every ſucceeding day only increaſed their ſuſpenſe, without throwing any light upon his deſtiny.

“ His brother, however, promiſed to be every thing they could wiſh; and they had
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the satisfaction of perceiving him improve daily as he grew up, but he never could efface the pleasing remembrance the Duke de Mercoeur retained of his elder grandson, of whom he was thus cruelly deprived, just at an age when he was particularly interesting, and he would not permit this second child to assume the title of Marquis de St. Cernin—to he only bore the one he would have been entitled to, had his brother been forthcoming, that of Count de Belville.

“ The Duke de Langueville was remarkably attached to the young Count, and spared no expence nor pains upon his education, which I had the honour of superintending.— As the young gentleman grew up, he longed to bear the first title, but the Duke his father, unwilling to revive the remembrance of his brother, and fearful of offending the Duke de Mercoeur, always put a negative upon his request.

“ At eighteen, he was allowed to be a most accomplished young man, and entered the service—had the command of a regiment of course.—A few months after this, the old Duke de Morcoeur died ; his honours, and great part of his immense property, devolved to his only brother, in default of male issue ; the remainder was settled, as I told you before, upon his daughter and her heirs, and of course now became the property of the Count de Belville ; but if he died without issue, the whole reverted to the present Marechal Duke de Mercoeur ; or if his long lost brother was ever discovered, and restored to his family, these estates and revenues were to be divided equally between them.

“ About six months ago, the Duke de Longueville thought of marrying his son—The number of years had elapsed since the loss of his eldest, left little room to doubt of his death ; and many of the first families in France sought an alliance with the young Marquis.—He had assumed this title upon the death of his grandfather.

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“ At last the Duke pitched upon Mademoiselle de Nevers, only daughter of Madame la Marechalle de Nevers : His choice met with his son’s approbation, so the match was agreed upon, and every preparation was made for a very splendid wedding ; but a few days before the ceremony was to have taken place, the young Marquis was seized with a violent putrid fever, which carried him off on the very day he was to have been united to the young heiress.

“ This dreadful shock nearly proved fatal to the Duke de Longueville ; for two months he lingered between life and death, and all his friends began seriously to apprehend he would follow his son to the grave.

“ The Marechal de Mercoeur was now become heir to all his late brother’s fortune ; he is at present upon an embassy to the Court of Spain, but wrote to the Duke de Longueville as soon as he heard of his nephew’s death, to inform his grace he expected to

have every thing delivered up to him immediately, though he should look upon the whole as a sacred trust for his elder nephew, if it pleased God his retreat should ever be discovered.

“ The Marechal certainly, in this instance, did not act up to the general tenor of his character ; for he was always remarkable both for his generosity and humanity, but he was never upon terms of intimacy with my patron ; first, because he had another match in view for his niece, when his brother forced her to marry the Duke de Longueville ; and secondly, because he tried in vain to persuade his grace to give up all thoughts of the young lady, convinced he would not obtain her heart with her hand.

“ But if he disliked my noble patron, he was still less partial to the late Marquis, tho’ he had shewn the strongest attachment to the first, and had most sincerely deplored his loss.

“ The

“ The Duke de Longueville answered his letter as soon as he was capable of holding a pen, and promised to restore every thing he had received or inherited from the late Duke, as speedily as possible ; but before this letter could have reached Madrid, a very unexpected event, to his grace’s great joy and inexpressible amazement, was discovered ; not only how he was deprived of his eldest son, but where he then was, and what had befallen him since he was snatched from the arms of his indulgent parents.

“ About a fortnight ago, a person, who said he was just arrived from England, came to l’Hotel de Longueville, and told the porter he must see his Grace, upon particular business.—The Duke ordered him to be admitted into his presence ; I was with his grace when he made his appearance ; he instantly delivered a sealed packet to the Duke, saying, I am totally ignorant of the contents of what I have brought your Grace ; ’twas put into my hands by a Frenchman, who

died in a spunging-house in London only a few days ago : He assured me I should be well rewarded for my trouble, as it contained a secret of the utmost importance to your Grace, but made me promise I would not set out 'till he was dead, as he had every thing to fear from your Grace's resentment.

“ The Duke seemed excessively astonished at this strange account, and turning to me, said, what can a person, in such low circumstances, have had to communicate to me upon his death bed, opening the packet while he spoke.—I leave you to judge of his feelings, when he found 'twas from the very person who had stolen his eldest son from the Castle of Longueville, near Fountainbleau. He detailed his whole plan, which had been crowned with the utmost success, and acknowledged revenge to have been his sole motive.—Then informed the Duke he had taken the child to a village beyond Bruxelles, where he had left him under the care of the curate, after promising to pay for his board, but had never kept his word ; from some
private

private inquiries he had lately caused to be made, he had learnt the curate was since dead, and that the young Marquis was under the care of the lord of the village, Baron Wielbourg, who had taken pity of his distressed situation, and had brought him up from a child, having no children of his own;—but it was very easy to recognize the young nobleman, as he brought a natural mark into the world with him that could never be effaced, which had been remarked by his Grace, and the late and present Dukes de Mercoeur; 'twas a large ripe mulberry within-side his left knee: Besides this, Baron Wielbourg must know the exact date of his being placed under the curate's care, which was on the 6th of April 1750, and would no doubt be very happy to restore him to his noble father; but should he refuse, the law would force him to deliver up so sacred a charge.

“I need not tell you what rejoicings this welcome news occasioned at the Hotel de
C 5 Longueville.

Longueville.—The person who brought it was handsomely rewarded, and an express was immediately sent off to Madrid, to inform the Duke de Mercoeur of this happy event, and his Grace, not being sufficiently recovered from his late dangerous illness to undertake so long a journey, sent me, who have the honour of officiating as his domestic chaplain, to Baron Wielbourg's, to claim his long-lost child; I was the bearer of the letter which had occasioned the discovery, and one from the Duke, expressive of his gratitude for the great kindness the Baron had shewn this his only son, and was empowered to pay all demands for his board, cloathing, and education.

“ I set out upon this agreeable errand with the greatest alacrity in the Duke's travelling carriage, attended by two of his Grace's servants, and stopt as little as possible, 'till I reached the Castle of Weilbourg, a fine old ancient building, in a village about six leagues beyond Bruxelles.

“ I

“I was received by the Baron in the most hospitable polite manner; I opened my commission by degrees; and having sufficiently prepared the worthy man for something extraordinary, I presented my two letters to him.—He read them over very attentively; their contents seemed to affect him very much.—At last he saw he had not a doubt as to the justice of the claim; he should therefore instantly restore the Marquis de St. Cernin to his illustrious family, though it would cost him a great deal to part with him, having been so long accustomed to look upon him as his own child, having, from every circumstance, presumed he was absolutely abandoned by those he belonged to; and having the most unbounded affection for the young man, he had actually determined to unite him to his niece, and to divide what he should have to dispose of at his death between them; the young people had been brought up together from their infancy, and a sort of mutual passion had grown up with them, and had considerably increased since—

he had informed them of his intentions.——

“I wish I may not have arrived very malapropos, my dear Sir,” said I: Was the ceremony to have taken place speedily?”

“Next week, Sir,” said the Baron; “and I am very happy, since I was to be deprived of my adopted son, you arrived in time to prevent it; for though Alphonse de Cheylus would have been a very good match for Alexis de Wielbourg (the name my pupil has hitherto borne), she would be as much the reverse, for the heir to one of the most illustrious houses in France.”

“I am afraid, Sir,” said I, “the young people will not see my arrival in the same light you do.—I own I almost wish the ceremony had taken place; for I dare say, your niece would do honour to the high rank the Marquis was born to inherit.”

“I must entreat, Sir,” said the Baron,
“you would not speak your sentiments so
5 freely

freely before the young man ; you are certainly a better judge of the Duke de Longueville's character than I am ; but you are not speaking his sentiments ; nor can you be acquainted with them, as he is totally ignorant of his son's situation with regard to my niece, and what you or I might think right or excusable at least, might appear in a very different light to his Grace ; but I would not permit the ceremony to take place now, upon any account ; 'twould be absolutely taking a base advantage of the young Marquis's passion for my niece, which might induce him to overlook her inferior birth and absolute want of fortune :—No, Mr. St. Abbé, it shall never be said Baron Wielbourg procured a splendid alliance for his orphan niece at the expence of his honour ; nor will I give the young people the slightest hopes an union between them will ever now take place : but with your permission, I will now break the wonderful intelligence you have brought to the Marquis, and the sooner he sets off the better 'twill be ; I only hope
the

the Duke de Longueville won't be averse to my corresponding with his lordship, whom I am no longer permitted to look upon as my son ; but I know he is very much attached to me, and I can't wean myself all at once from the pleasing delusion I have cherished for so many years.

“ The Duke had desired me not to hazard affronting the Baron, by any offers of pecuniary recompense, for the trouble and expence his son had occasioned him, except he led to the point himself ; and so far from seeming to reflect upon the money he had expended upon the Marquis, he merely wished Providence had permitted him to be still more bountiful ; I was obliged to be silent upon that head ; but to cut my story short, for it grows late, suffice it to say, it required all the Baron's authority to induce the Marquis to leave the castle and this young lady, with whom he was upon the point of marriage.—However, between three and four o'clock yesterday afternoon, after witnessing

nessing a scene which almost bring tears into my eyes, from the bare recollection: His lordship and I left Wielbourg; the Baron's own horses carried us to Bruxelles, where we slept, or more properly, past the night; for no argument I have yet been able to make use of, has at all consoled the Marquis for his separation from his beloved friends; he has scarcely eat or drank since we left the Baron's.—The bason of soup he took an hour ago is the only thing he seems to have relished; but as his complaint lays chiefly upon the mind, I am in hopes the tender caresses of his fond father, and the dissipation and pleasures Paris affords, will soon rather efface the violent impression the inhabitants of the Castle of Wielbourg have made upon his heart; and I trust a little repose will enable him to prosecute his journey to-morrow."

The curate and his cousin, who had listened to the Abbé's recital with the greatest attention, lifted up their hands and eyes when
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he concluded; and the former poured out another glass of wine, while Mademoiselle Vernet said love was a very wonderful passion, and happy were those whose minds had never been disturbed by such worldly notions.

The Abbé now said he wished to retire, because, in case the Marquis was inclined to sleep, he should disturb him in going through the room; so another basin of soup was warmed, and the Abbé took his leave of the two cousins; he found the Marquis awake, but something better, he said, and at the Abbé's pressing request, he drank part of the excellent cordial he had brought him; the Abbé then retired, and we will leave him to repose, if possible, while we return to the Castle of Wielbourg.

C H A P. II.

AS Baron Wielbourg makes a conspicuous figure in the following pages, it will be necessary to give the reader a short account of him.—Alexis Wielbourg was the only son of the late Baron of that name, who, not being very rich; chiefly resided at his family seat near Bruxelles, which has been already mentioned; he had married a most amiable woman, who died in the prime of youth, leaving behind her a son and a daughter

daughter.—The son was brought up for the army, and the daughter was educated at the convent of Beguines, at Malines: The young man soon obtained a commission in the Imperial army, and behaved with the greatest bravery in several engagements, but retired at the age of five and thirty, with the rank of major, to his paternal habitation, having received a wound, which incapacitated him from using his left arm.

The father had been dead about four years, and his sister had married much about the same time, a French officer, the younger son of a provincial nobleman, whose commission was his only support, ; he died very soon after the Baron quitted the service, leaving his widow with child, and in very poor circumstances.—Her brother immediately sent for her to Wielbourg, and took her under his protection: She had had several other children, but they all died in their infancy.

Soon

Soon after her arrival at the castle, she laid in of a daughter, whose birth cost her her life; all she had to leave the unfortunate orphan was her blessing; but she knew she left her under the care of one of the best of men, who did not need his dying sister's recommendation to induce him to commiserate her helpless situation; he therefore assured her unfortunate mother, she should never feel the loss of those parents it had pleased God to deprive her of, while he lived; and if he died, he would take care to provide for her, as he never intended to marry, but to dedicate his whole time to the management of his estates, and the education of his infant charge.

Soon after his sister's death, he took an elderly woman (who had been strongly recommended to him by his cousin, who was the prioress of the convent where his sister had been educated) into his house, to preside over his household, and to take care of his niece, who was christened Alphonine after her mother.

She

She grew very fast, and the Baron was so fond of her, that she was generally nursed in his presence.

She was about nine months old, when chance directed the Baron's steps one morning to the curate's of the village, an aged infirm ecclesiastic, of a most excellent character:—He was in reality what Mr. de Bauve wished to be thought; for he always shared his scanty pittance with the neighbouring poor; their cares were his, and he was a friend to all; in former times he had been a constant visitor at the castle, and had in some respects been the Baron's tutor, who was very much attached to the worthy man, and often visited him since his infirmities had almost totally confined him to the parsonage-house, which was at the extremity of the village from the castle.

The Baron walked in as usual, without ceremony, and found the venerable curate fondling a beautiful boy, about fifteen months old.

old. He was rather astonished at the sight, as he thought he knew all the children in the village, but did not recollect the features of this one; but being excessively struck with him, he said with a smile,

“ So, so, my old friend, is that a child or a grandchild of your’s.”

The good man prest the sweet fellow in his arms, and said, “ ’tis my child, my dear Baron, I am happy to see you; pray be seated.”

The good man’s looks, while he spoke, said more than his words, and raised the Baron’s curiosity; he took a seat opposite the old man, and put out his hand to the child, who flung its little arms round the curate’s neck, and seemed to implore his protection. The worthy man caressed him, and desired him not to be afraid; that gentleman loved all unfortunate little children, so he must give him his hand, setting him
down

down for that purpose.—The child immediately turned to the Baron, and put out his little mouth to kiss him, while the tears stood in its eyes.—The Baron caught him up in his arms, saying, such a sweet child can't be unfortunate.—The child returned his caresses, and seemed to wish to make all the friends it could.

The Baron looked at his old friend, who had not been able to restrain a tear, and said, he felt himself very much interested in the little fellow's fate, and longed to know who he was, as he guessed there was some mystery belonging to him, by the looks of his tutor; an appellation he often gave the curate.

“ I will give you all the intelligence in my power,” said the old curate, “ concerning this infant:—“ You, my dear Baron, will wonder how any parent could part with such a blessing; he has not been in my house more than two hours.”

“ Pray

"Pray go on," said the Baron, which the good man did as follows:

"I was but just out of bed when my old servant came to inform me a stranger was in the house, who wanted to speak with me immediately. You know I make it a rule to see every body, so I ordered Claudine to conduct the person into my bed-room; a very decent man soon made his appearance, with this child in his arms.—I desired him to sit down, and to tell me his business; he merely bowed, and thus addressed me.

"Your known charity, worthy Sir, has induced a nobleman of great rank to wish to place this child under your care; 'tis the fruit of a secret amour, and must be brought up privately; here are fifty guineas for its board, &c. the first year, and you will receive the like sum annually, if you consent to take him under your protection; but if that is not in your power, can you recommend me to a proper person likely to undertake such a charge upon the same terms."

"Since

“ Since some nobleman has thought me worthy such a sacred trust,” said I, “ by your account he surely wont object to my knowing who ’tis pays me so high a compliment.—Besides, I should wish to have his direction, that I might be able to write to him in case of necessity.”

“ I am not permitted to satisfy your curiosity, Sir,” said the stranger; “ but you must suppose ’tis somebody has a very high opinion of you; though this is a secret of such a serious nature, they wish to take every precaution not to have it divulged; but you must decide immediately, whether you chuse to accept of the offers I was authorized to make.”

“ I reflected for a few minutes, and at last, fearful some evil might befall the hapless babe, if I refused to interfere in its behalf:— I said I would willingly take him into my house, ’till the nobleman could better provide for him.

The

The man looked confused; I thought the child seemed terrified, and evidently wished to get away from him—so I put out my arms to receive him; and I believe I should have reproached the fellow with having treated the sweet fellow cruelly; but the moment I had got hold of him, he laid the money down upon the table, said something about cloaths I could not understand, and hurried out of the room as fast as possible; therefore I can't say I place much faith in the story he told me, and he was out of sight before I could have had him stopt; the little fellow was very happy when he was gone, and has eat a very hearty breakfast, which he seemed to stand in need of; since which, I have been asking him some questions; but all I can comprehend is, mamma and nurse; he certainly is a child of some rank; and what is very remarkable, he has a mulberry within his left knee, shewing it to the Baron, while he spoke, and the little fellow made a motion to eat it.

He seemed remarkably clever, and the Baron declared he felt himself so much interested for him, that he instantly offered to relieve his aged friend from the charge he had undertaken, saying, the sweet fellow would be an excellent companion for his little Alphonse, who would very soon run alone, and children were naturally fond of each other; besides, he would amuse him.— The curate said, he willingly consented to the Baron's proposal, as the child would be so much better off in every respect, than he could be with him, and immediately went to fetch the money, which the Baron absolutely refused to take, telling the benevolent curate he wished him to enjoy all the emoluments, as he meant him, in some respects, to share the trouble with him; for if the child was not reclaimed, they would both be his preceptors, as he grew up.

The curate said, from the precautions that had been taken by those who had thus thrown him, at such an early age, upon the mercy of
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an absolute stranger, he thought there was little chance of his ever being reclaimed—or of their ever paying the promised sum;—he was only very angry with himself, for not having thought to ask whether he had ever been christened, or what his name was.

“ He has undoubtedly been christened,” said the Baron; “ but as we are at a loss for a name, if we don’t hear any thing from his parents in the course of a month, we will have the ceremony performed again, that he may have two instead of one.”

The time mentioned having elapsed, he was christened by the worthy curate; the Baron was his godfather, and bestowed his own Christian and family name upon him.—He was treated more like the Baron’s heir at the castle, than a deserted stranger.—The Baron’s love for him increased daily; his excellent temper gained him the favour and good wishes of all the household.—As soon as he could speak plain, the Baron undertook

the post he had assigned himself, namely, that of his preceptor.—The only recollection he ever displayed of his relations, occurred one day.—Soon after he could make himself understood, a commander of Malta, an old friend of the Baron's, stopped at his castle, in his way to Bruxelles.—His cross caught the child's attention the moment he entered, and he ran eagerly to meet him.—The gentleman took him up, when he came near enough, saying, "is this a nephew of your's, Baron;" but the child struggled to get from him, and seemed excessively disappointed.—The Baron related his story to his friend, and they both concluded he was the illicit offspring of some commander of Malta; and both questioned him upon the subject, but soon found he had not taken the visitor for papa, though he could not make them understand whom he had reminded him of, but somebody he seemed to have been very fond of, they were both convinced.

The

The child improved rapidly under the Baron's tuition, but not a farthing more money ever reached the curate.—This circumstance rather added to the Baron's affection for his pupil, as 'twas only what he expected; and what added to the natural philanthropy of his disposition, had first induced him to ask the curate to put the child under his care.—In short, the worthy man divided his truly paternal attention between his beloved niece and his adopted son.

Alphonse de Cheylus promised to be a most beautiful woman, like her mother, and her mind was early cultivated by her indulgent uncle.—As they grew up, he spent one half of the year at Bruxelles, that his protégés might profit by the instructions of the best masters that celebrated town afforded.

At seventeen, Alexis was a remarkable fine youth of his age, and wished very much to go into the Austrian service, and the Baron would not have opposed his wishes,—

could he have cleared up to his satisfaction, the mystery that still hung over his birth ;— but knowing to what disagreeable consequences such a stigma, in some respects, might subject the young man, he put a gentle negative upon his request, though he was now doatingly fond of him ; and 'twas not much to be wondered at, as the young man possessed every requisite to manly beauty ;— and his youthful mind having been early polished and improved by his excellent friend, made him a most agreeable companion.

The worthy curate, to whose care he had been first intrusted, had long since paid the debt of nature ; but as he drew near his latter end, he often sent for Alexis, who had attained the age of reason.—He would then point out to him, in the strongest terms, the obligations he laid under to his noble benefactor, and what would most probably have been his fate at *his* death, if he had not met with such a generous friend.

Tears

Tears of gratitude frequently stole down the youth's cheeks, while he endeavoured to assure this worthy man, of whose kind lessons he found he was so soon to be deprived. He would always follow his excellent advice as nearly as laid in his power, and certainly strictly adhered to his word.—He often reflected upon the strength of the curate's arguments; he certainly might, at his death, have been sent to one of the numerous hospitals Brabant abounds in, for the reception of orphan children, and would then have been obliged to labour hard for his bread.—This idea, far from humiliating him, only increased the love he bore his patron, and the gratitude he felt for his kindness towards him.

* Alphonse de Cheylus was six months younger than Alexis : At fifteen, her beauty was remarked by every body, and 'twas her least perfection at eighteen.—Owing to her uncle's care and attention, she was perfectly mistress of every polite accomplishment;—

and the natural sweetness of her temper made her universally beloved.

Alexis had prosecuted many of the same studies she had, and had loved her from his childhood.—The first word he tried to utter, after he became an inhabitant of the castle, was the name of Alphonse, and the first phrase he ever addressed to her was—I love you.—This childish attachment grew up with him, and increased as he became more capable of appreciating her merits.—Alphonse looked upon him as a favourite brother, and was never so happy as in his company; but as they grew up, they both found it necessary to be more reserved in their expressions, and less familiar in their behaviour; each felt the power of love, without daring to acknowledge it; even to themselves, fearful of the consequences.—They were both absolutely dependant upon the Baron; and his goodness was a still stronger tie upon them:—Alexis thought 'twould be the height of presumption in him to look up
to

to his patron's niece; yet as the passion he had so long and so innocently cherished in his bosom gained strength every day, he made use of every argument he could think of, to induce the Baron to allow him to enter the army, in hopes he might, by his talents and bravery, obtain some rank, which would make him more worthy such an alliance.

The Baron, who had long since discovered their mutual love, secretly applauded the motive which induced Alexis to wish to illustrate his name by his martial deeds, tho' he would not permit him to follow the bent of his inclinations; but knowing how worthy they were of each other, and how happy 'twas in his power to make them, he told his favourite Alexis his sentiments in favour of his niece were no secret to him; therefore, as he could not bear the thoughts of parting with him, he had his free consent to disclose his passion to his Alphonsine, and if she consented to receive his vows, he should, with rapture, acknowledge him for his nephew.

His highly-favoured pupil flung himself at his feet, but was unable to utter a single word.—What father would have been more indulgent to an only son.—These were the reflections of Alexis, while he bathed his benefactor's hand with his silent tears, the pure offering of a grateful heart.—The amiable man raised his beloved son, as he often called Alexis, folded him in his arms, and gave him his blessing, with true paternal fervour.—They now separated; and Alexis, eager to impart his happy prospects to his adored Alphonse, flew to seek her: She was at work in her dressing-room.—The moment he entered, he exclaimed,

“ Oh! my dearest sister—my best of friends has generously consented to gratify the only wish I ever dared to form, without first knowing whether it would meet his approbation.”

Alphonse trembled, turned pale, and said in a faltering voice,

“ You

“ You are going to leave us, then, Alexis ? ”

A tear started from her eye as she concluded.

“ Not except you desire it, my beloved friend,” said Alexis ; “ my fate is in your hands,” falling upon his knees as he spoke, and with that eloquence real love inspires, he pressed her to make him the happiest of men.

Alphonse's heart had been long in his possession ; and as she was far superior to the embarrassment and affectation some of her sex assume upon such occasions.—She did not keep the man in suspense, whom she had so long in secret preferred : Their transports were mutual ; and they, each actuated by the same grateful motives, sought the worthy Baron, who sincerely participated in the happiness both their countenances expressed.—He gave them his blessing ; told them they should reside with him while he lived, and at his death, they should inherit all 'twas in his

power to dispose of; and as there required no very splendid preparations upon the joyful occasion, the wedding-day was soon fixed upon, and the ceremony was to have taken place the ensuing week. Such was the situation of affairs when l'Abbé de Mondevergue arrived at the castle; his interview with the Baron has been already mentioned, and the Baron undertook to communicate the extraordinary tidings he had brought to the child of his adoption; he knew the power he had over his mind, but he had never allotted himself a more painful task.

To part thus suddenly from this favourite pupil, was almost more than he could bear; and to add to the heart-felt grief he knew this separation would cause his dearest Alexis, he found himself obliged to inform him he must relinquish all those fond hopes he had himself inspired him with only a fortnight before; he judged what Alexis's feelings would be by his own, and knew what a severe sentence he was going to pronounce;
but

but since it must be done, the sooner 'twas over the better; delay would only increase the difficulty: So having ordered different refreshments to be set before the Abbé, he went into his study, and sent for Alexis.

The young man was reading to his beloved Alphonse, who doubly enjoyed the beauties of the author, while she listened to her lover; but he instantly laid the book down, to obey the summons he had received. Indeed, an implicit obedience to his patron had marked his conduct from his childhood.

The Baron was not one of those rigid moralists, who preach what they never practise; for his whole life had been a continued series of good actions, and Alexis looked up with awe and reverence to a man whose virtues made him as universally respected as he was beloved.

The utmost familiarity always prevailed between the Baron and his children, for such
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he termed Alexis and Alphonfine; and the former soon entered his study in excellent spirits. The Baron had seated himself near his writing-table, and was re-perusing the letter which had occasioned this wonderful discovery, and was so interested in his lecture, that he had hardly noticed the young man's entrance, who, perceiving the Baron was busy, approached one of the windows to wait his leisure.

The oftener the Baron read this strange confession, which had so unexpectedly restored Alexis to the rank he was born to enjoy, the more it puzzled him; and he wondered the Duke de Longueville had not made some of the reflections which occurred to him: That Alexis was his grace's long lost son, he was perfectly convinced, as the date of his having been left under the curate's care, and the mark within his left knee, put that matter beyond a doubt. The Baron was not weak enough to attribute the noble sentiments Alexis had always displayed, to his exalted birth,

birth; a peasant's son, who had been equally well educated, might have acted, thought, and expressed himself as he did.—The Baron differed in this point from the generality of the German nobility, who suppose virtue, courage—in short, every manly virtue, the constant attributes of high birth, and can hardly allow a peasant or a mechanic to possess common sense, and are certain such men must be deficient in fortitude, and cowards, when exposed to any danger.

But what most astonished the Baron, in the letter he was pausing over, was the little inducement the man, who confessed his criminal action, had to commit it. If revenge was his motive, as he said, 'twas very odd he had not also tried to deprive the Duke de Longueville of his second son, and still more strange, since he had gone the lengths he did, he had not murdered both the children, though he did not find that he would have been any gainer by their death; therefore
mere

mere spite had made him run a very great risk, to little or no purpose,

That remorse had induced the miserable wretch to reveal his wicked deed upon his death-bed, was possible, the Baron thought, and he believed crimes of such magnitude had often been thus discovered; still he could not think this man had been sincere, even in his last moments; for the Duke de Longueville, in the letter he had wrote the Baron mentioned the large rewards which had been offered by himself, the late and present Duke de Mercoeur, for the recovery of this lost child; and at last, they had all gone so far as to promise a free pardon to whoever had committed the wicked deed; and if they would but restore the infant, they should receive the reward.

Now, as the only motive the Baron could assign for this man's behaviour was poverty, and not having met with that support and relief he seemed to have a right to expect from

the Duke de Mercoeur's family, this generous offer ought to have induced him to have thrown himself upon these gentlemen's mercy, for the strange life he acknowledged to have led ; and the place he died in, were convincing proofs his circumstances were not in a very flourishing state.

What with these reflections, and the thoughts of how he must break the matter to his dear Alexis, a quarter of an hour or more elapsed, before he reflected his pupil was in the room.

At last, having summoned all his remaining fortitude to his assistance, he called to Alexis, saying, " sit down, my dear fellow ; I sent for you to impart some very extraordinary intelligence to you."

Alexis did as he was ordered, and was very much surprised at the evident perturbation of his worthy patron, who gazed upon him in silence for some seconds.

" You

“ You surprise me, my dear Sir,” said Alexis; “ what has happened—or what have you to impart to me ?”

“ Something of the greatest importance, my dear ——” child he would have said ;—but seeing the alarm he had already given his pupil, his own feelings got the better of him, and he was obliged to lean his head upon the table, while he gave way to the overflowing of his heart. Alexis trembled, and began to dread to hear what such an extraordinary prelude announced ; he would have spoke, but could not, ’till the Baron raised his head, and again fixed his eyes upon him :—He then said, “ Oh ! Sir, what can you have to tell me that thus afflicts you ?”

The Baron looked at the two letters which lay upon the table between them ; but at last, reflecting what an example he was setting his beloved pupil, he roused all his courage, and said,

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“ I am a foolish, weak, old fellow, my dear boy ; you must not mind my silly behaviour, which I ought to be ashamed of ;— for such weakness would hardly be excusable in a woman—but I find I am the soldier again, assuming an air of gaiety very foreign to his heart ; and knowing suspense to be the worst of all evils, he thought he would come to the point immediately, in hopes the brilliant prospects which were opening to his pupil, would in some respects console him for the sacrifice he must resolve to make ; so turning to the petrified youth, who was almost breathless with his fears, he said, compose yourself, my dear Alexis, for I am certain what I am going to relate would make nineteen out of twenty of our fashionable young men the happiest of mortals ; but I am a competent judge of the excellent heart, in some respects, of my own forming, and I know there is but little pride in your composition ; still I am convinced you will be highly pleased, when I inform you, the mystery which hitherto has enveloped
your

your origin in obscurity, is removed, and that your birth is far more illustrious than I expected; one of those letters upon the table, has occasioned this wonderful discovery;—and I am very happy, when I reflect that you are likely to do honour to the high rank you were born to shine in.—While I lived, you know you would neither have wanted a father or a friend, and you would have been provided for at my death, but not so amply as I could have wished, as part of my estates devolve, with my title, to a distant male relation; but thank God, you are no longer in need of any thing I can do for you; my niece alone now will reap the benefit of my late savings; she will be as happy as myself, I am convinced, when she learns her brother is restored to his noble family, and we will console each other for the loss we shall sustain in being deprived of your society.”

“ Oh! Heaven! my dear father,” said Alexis, “ I can’t bear to hear you talk in this cool deliberate manner, of my leaving the
Castle

Castle of Wielbourg, and all I hold dear upon earth.—Surely, after all your kindness, you can't think of banishing the ——.”

The Baron hastily interrupted him, saying, “you have not heard a tenth part of what I have got to say, my dear fellow : Believe me, I shall always have your interest, your honour, and your glory at heart ; and shall never cease to regard you as my son, notwithstanding you are now so much my superior. Heaven forbid I should ever think of banishing the child of my adoption ; to see you now and then, will constitute my greatest felicity ; but read those two letters, my dear child ; they will explain every thing to you better than I could relate it ; begin with this, giving him the one which contained the villain's confession of his crime.— You will soon find I have no longer any power over you.”

Alexis took the letter and read it over with great attention ; and when he had concluded,

ed, without reflecting upon the gentle hints the Baron had given him respecting Alphonfine, he threw it down, rose hastily, and flinging his arms round the Baron, said, "Oh! my dearest and best of fathers, for I know no other as yet, nor can I ever love another half so well.—Now I shall have it in my power to convince my Alphonfine of the disinterestedness of my love; we will spend half of the year with you, who have been the protector of our infancy, and the guide of our youth; and you must promise to spend the remainder with us in France—but allow me to run and impart our happy prospects to my dearest Alphonfine."

The Baron sighed, and entreated him once more to calm his transports; adding, "really, my dear Alexis, you won't allow yourself time for reflection; your present joy is as extravagant as your late grief was. I am excessively flattered, by the proofs you have given me of your regard; and my niece would

would no doubt be equally gratified ; but you must be rather better acquainted with the Duke de Longueville's sentiments, before I can permit you to make any further professions to her : Read the other letter ; 'tis from your father ; I will then explain myself more fully ; he is very impatient, as must be supposed, to see his long-lost son, and I am sure you won't hesitate a moment in obeying his orders."

" Surely, my dear Sir," replied Alexis, " you would not wish me to leave the Castle before I am the happiest of men.—If my father loves me but half as well as you do, he won't expect me to do it."

" I desire you would read his Grace's letter," said the Baron, " and not give way to silly romantic ideas."

Alexis obeyed,—the Duke's letter was very polite ; but there was a cool formality in the thanks he returned the Baron ; for the
essential

essential service he had done him, by no means pleased the young man.—When he had finished it, he returned it to his patron, saying, “I am certain the Duke de Longueville is not aware of the obligations you have laid him under, my dearest, and best of friends.”

The Baron smiled at the warmth with which Alexis spoke, and said, “your remark is very flattering, my dear fellow, but would you have Princes and Dukes express themselves in as familiar terms as you and I do? You should reflect it would be lowering their dignity.—I merely performed an act of humanity, when I took you under my care; and his Grace’s thanks are far more than adequate to so simple a deed.”

“I can only say, my dear friend,” said Alexis, “had I been in the Duke’s place, I should have expressed myself very differently; but why need I be in such violent haste to obey his summons.”

“ Can my Alexis ask me such a question,” said the Baron; “ but pray sit down again, we shan’t have much time to spend together; the Duke’s chaplain is now in the next room; he was the bearer of those letters; he is to return as soon as possible, by his Grace’s orders, who would have undertaken the journey himself, had he been sufficiently recovered, you find, from a violent fit of illness, which was brought on by the death of your brother, of whom he was amazingly fond; the more so, no doubt, from having been so early deprived of you; but this unexpected discovery, and your presence, will greatly accelerate his recovery, I hope; and that affection he felt for the late Marquis will be transferred to you; therefore you will in future have two fathers, my dear son, and we will correspond regularly once a week, if agreeable; for your letters will always afford me the greatest satisfaction.”

Alexis sat buried in thought, having determined to hear all the Baron had got to say ; but when he stooped, he looked at his benefactor, saying,

“ You desire me, then, to obey a person whom I never saw, and whom I cannot yet love—yet you mean to restore me to a father who may wish to make me miserable, when you, who have hitherto so generously supplied his place, have it in your power to make me the happiest of men.—Allow me to be united this very evening to the only woman who can ever make me happy in that state, and let us say we have been privately married for some time, for fear ——.”

“ Stop, Alexis,” said the Baron, “ your love gets the better of both your reason and your prudence ; I know what you dread ; but could you wish, or can you expect I would connive at a deception upon the author of your being.—You certainly forgot whom you were addressing, my dear child ;

I certainly displayed a very unpardonable weakness, when you first came in, which might induce you to make such a proposal; but I will never consent to a dishonourable action; besides, were I so basely inclined, reflect how easily your father might set aside a marriage contracted without his consent, and before you were of age; but I won't flatter you with vain chimeras, which there is not the slightest chance in the world that will ever now be realized.—Had the ceremony absolutely been performed, why 'tis possible the Duke, when he had reflected upon your situation and circumstances at the time it took place, might have ratified your union by his consent; but as matters are, you must learn to submit with resignation to the decrees of Heaven.—Your fortitude has hitherto never been put to the trial; now is the time to shew yourself a man, and to set both me and Alphonse an example of heroism; for you can't suppose the Duke de Longueville will approve of his only son's

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marrying

marrying the orphan daughter of a poor subaltern officer."

Alexis attempted several times to speak, but the Baron prevented him, saying, "hear me out, first, Alexis, and weigh well what I say, before you attempt to confute any of my arguments.—I know it would be a difficult task to forget my niece; I don't require such an effort; merely endeavour to think of her as if she was your sister, and my daughter; but give up all thoughts of her for a wife; for positively, was the Duke de Longueville to consent to your union, I don't think I should; for I should merely attribute the Duke's condescension to a compliment I am by no means entitled to, and I really think I should see the match in a more preposterous light than I do at present; but as there is not the slightest probability that his Grace would listen to such a proposal, even with common patience, 'twill be most prudent in you not to run the risk of incurring his displeasure, by mentioning my niece's name to him.

him.—I will take upon myself to console her, but I must insist upon your not seeing her again.”

Alexis started from his chair, and looked half wild.—The Baron rose and took his hand, saying,

“Hitherto, my dear child, you have made it a rule never to disobey me ; don’t break through it in the present instance ; I know what would be the consequence ; were you to see Alphonse just now, you would both be making rash vows, which you would very possibly be obliged to break, and your mutual adieus would only add to the sufferings of each.

“I will inform her of what has induced you to set off so precipitately ; and I am certain I shall be able to convince her I was in the right, in not allowing you to take leave of each other.

“ Reflect upon the rank you now enjoy, and think of the pleasures which await you, and how much you would be hurt to see the woman of your choice slighted by the brilliant circle she must move in, her own spirits would not support her ; she would find herself overlooked and eclipsed, and you would have to blush for her, from the recluse manner in which she has been brought up, your love would vanish, and you might soon both be miserable.”

Alexis insisted upon being now heard in his turn, and made use of all the persuasion he was master of, to induce the Baron to consent to his having one more interview with Alphonsine, in his presence, if he objected to his seeing her alone ; but to leave the house without seeing her, was more than he could resolve to do, even to oblige his benefactor.

The Baron, whenever he was convinced he was in the right, was inflexible in his determinations

terminations; he therefore said, without paying any regard to his pupil's fervent entreaties, "that much as he felt at the idea of parting with him, he thought the sooner he set out the better; he should be more composed when he was gone, and more capable of entering upon the arduous task he had undertaken, namely, to console his niece.—l'Abbé de Mondevergues, who seemed a polite sensible feeling man, was anxious to return.—He would advise him merely to take a change of cloaths with him; he would take care to forward the rest of his wardrobe, &c. to Paris; his own horses should be put too, to take them to Bruxelles; he would not want any servants, as the Duke had sent him two; and concluded by saying, come, allow me to introduce you to the Abbé; you shall be upon the road to Paris in an hour," taking Alexis by the hand while he spoke; but this sudden and abrupt departure from a place he had hardly ever quitted, except with the Baron and his Alphonsine, quite overcame the young man, and no longer able to

conceal or check his emotion, he fell at the Baron's feet, to entreat once more he would allow him to take a last adieu of the woman he adored.—Had the Baron given way to the dictates of his excellent heart, he would have granted his request; he had never found himself obliged to put a negative upon a wish of his dear pupil's before; but a moment's reflection convinced him, that the first resolution he had formed, would save them both a most distressing scene; he therefore resolutely opposed the young man's desires, promising him, at the same time, by way of consolation, that he would write to him the very next day, and would inform him exactly how his niece bore her disappointment; he therefore hoped he would endeavour to convince his father that he had not obeyed his kind summons with reluctance, as he ought to reflect how much such a notion would hurt the Duke, and would be very ill repaying the impatience and anxiety he expressed to see him; and after he had spent a few months with his Grace, he would be better

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ter able to judge of his disposition, and what were his intentions respecting him, but desired him, as he valued *his* friendship, not to mention Alphonse to the Duke, 'till he was convinced his sentiments were likely to meet with his Grace's approbation.

Alexis, finding that he must either obey his more than father, or disoblige him beyond forgiveness, was as desirous to set out as he had been just before to protract his stay, in hopes that he should be more reconciled to his fate, when he was out of sight of the Castle of Wielbourg, and in less than an hour he departed with l'Abbé de Mondevergues.—He might perhaps have consoled himself in some respects, had he been even allowed to write to the woman he so soon expected to have called his, but the Baron would not permit him, and he could not help thinking his much revered friend was very cruel in this one instance; a silent embrace was all that passed between him and the Baron, when he set off.—The consequence of his precipitate

E 5
departure,

departure, in such a state of mind, has already been related.

Alphonfine was greatly to be pitied; she had been left in momentary expectation of her lover's return; therefore, what was her surprise when she found he had left the Castle, perhaps for ever.—The Baron broke his departure to her in the most gentle terms, and, by way of affording her some consolation, told her what difficulty he had had to induce Alexis to set off without making her a witness of the sorrow he felt.—Like her lover, she thought 'twas very cruel of her uncle to deny him so trifling a satisfaction.—The Baron dedicated his whole time and attention to the unfortunate Alphonfine, and did all in his power to reconcile her to the loss of her Alexis; for he did not permit himself to suppose, much less to flatter her with there being any hopes that the Duke de Longueville would approve of her for a daughter-in-law, and thought Alexis was much the least to be pitied; he was going to mix in a new world,
and

and the respect and variety he would meet with, added to the luxuries and pleasures he would enjoy, would first console, and very soon reconcile him to the loss of his Alphonsine.

C H A P. III.

WE will now return to Pont a Marque, where we left all parties trying to repose.—Mademoiselle Vernet rose at break of day; she and her maid were very busy in arranging the parlour for breakfast, when they heard l'Abbé de Mondevergues come out of the Marquis's room.

E 6

Mademoiselle

Mademoiselle flew to meet him, and began to inquire, with well dissembled anxiety, how his Lordship found himself.—Rather better, the Abbé said—thanks to her excellent soup and a good bed; he had enjoyed a few hours repose, and talked of going forwards immediately.—The curate, who entered while the Abbé was speaking, was shocked at what he heard, and began to expatiate upon the fine air of Pont a Marque; adding, he really thought his Lordship ought not to leave it so speedily, as travelling again so soon might bring on a relapse.

The Abbé said, “he hoped not; but at all events, it would be useless to attempt to oppose the Marquis’s wishes;—he would favour them with his company to breakfast, but intended to sleep at Arras.”

Mademoiselle instantly left the room to make the coffee;—his Lordship and the Abbé were to be fortunate; for they happened, by mere chance, to have some of the best

mocca in the house, which had been made the curate a present of by one of his female devotees.

The Abbé walked to the inn, to give the servants their orders, and the curate joined his cousin; they easily consoled themselves for his Lordship's intended departure, by reflecting, that the sooner he reached Paris, the sooner their generous hospitality would be known to the Duke de Longueville.— However, the Marquis left them something to keep up their spirits 'till they received the reward they fancied themselves so justly entitled to from his father.

On the third day, our travellers arrived to dinner at Paris; drove of course to l'Hotel de Longueville, in the Rue de l'Université: The superb mansion was the gift of the Duke de Mercoeur's to his daughter, upon her marriage, and entailed, as every thing else was upon her heirs.

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But it may now be necessary to say a few words about the present possessor of it. The Duke de Longueville was in his five and fortieth year ; had never been handsome, but was a stout fine figure ; he was proud, ambitious, and reserved, even to his most intimate friends, though his conversation and manners were excessively fascinating, when he particularly wished to please. He held a very distinguished post in the royal household. Indeed nature seemed to have intended him for a courtier ; for few men could act a studied part with more grace ; he always reflected before he spoke ; and as he was by no means communicative, most people thought him a man of profound knowledge and great understanding.—His temper was very unequal ; and though he certainly enjoyed every luxury and every pleasure Paris afforded, he often seemed unhappy.—Ostentatious in the display and disposal of his riches, he seemed to derive very little enjoyment from his immense income : Yet the idea of delivering up the large fortune he had received with his wife,

wife, to the present Marechal de Mercoeur, had considerably added to the regret he felt for the loss of his son.—Interest and ambition had first prompted him to make proposals to the late Duke in favour of his daughter; but his grace, who expected his daughter's husband to unite every perfection, exclusive of high rank, and an immense fortune, refused even to listen to the person the Duke de Longueville had employed as his Ambassador, knowing the style of splendour he lived in was merely supported by the pensions he derived from the places he held about the Court.

Notwithstanding the Duke de Longueville's pride was excessively piqued, his avarice got the better of his resentment, and conscious of the benefits likely to result from such a match, he got another friend, who was in the ministry at the time, to plead his cause to the Duke de Mercoeur.—This gentleman's arguments in his favour removed all his Grace's prejudices, and, to the great
astonishment

astonishment of all who were acquainted with the Duke de Mercoeur, in direct opposition to the wishes of his only brother, and very much against the inclinations of his daughter, he consented to the Duke de Longueville's proposals, who, within a fortnight, was thus, contrary to his expectations, united to one of the first heiresses in France.—What followed this union, has been already related.

'Twas between one and two when the Marquis and the Abbé arrived, the former still far from well.—He had never undertaken a journey of twenty miles at any one time before; therefore, what with fatigue, and the deep regret he still felt at having been forced in a manner so abruptly to quit the Castle of Wielbourg at such a moment, and situated as he was, with respect to Alphonsine, he did not look to much advantage.

The Duke, from the moment his retreat had been discovered, had expressed the
greatest

greatest impatience to see and embrace this long-lost son; but as the days were short, and 'twas impossible to travel the road he was coming by night, owing to the different fortified towns he had to pass, the gates of which are always shut at dusk, he did not expect him so soon, though he knew the Abbé would do his utmost to oblige him.

However, their speedy arrival was truly flattering to the great man's pride, and the moment he was informed his son was arrived, he ordered him to be shewn into his dressing-room.

The Marquis was excessively agitated, as the moment approached which was to introduce him, for the first time in his life (at least to his recollection), to the Author of his being.

Whether the Duke was afraid of appearing too anxious, or was fearful of lowering his dignity, cannot easily be ascertained; for the

the part he acted did not seem very natural in an impatient father, he remained seated upon a sofa, 'till the Marquis appeared at the room door; he wished the Abbé to have preceded him in, but that the polite priest could not think of; he therefore made a sort of involuntary stop just within the room, having expected, from the account the Abbé had given him of his father's prodigious impatience to see him, he would have been close to the door to have received him; instead of which, he was seated near the fire at the other end of the room.

However, the Duke rose at the moment the Marquis stooped, and advanced two steps towards him, but he was evidently more struck by his fine manly figure, than affected by his appearance.—Indeed, his surprise was visible for some moments; but having rather recovered himself, he said, in a gentle voice, “come to my arms, my dear, and long lost child.”—The Marquis approached, and received his embrace; but it was not given
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with that genuine warmth the young man had been taught to expect; for while the Duke pressed him in his arms, he seemed to shrink from him, and his looks by no means corresponded with his words.

The Marquis had always been treated with the most paternal tenderness by Baron Wielbourg; and even when he denied him the last favour he so earnestly solicited him to grant, he easily perceived his refusal did not arise from want of love; and the more he had reflected upon the amiable man's behaviour since, the more he was convinced of the sincere attachment he bore him, and of the grief he felt when they parted.—Nay, he even began to think he had acted right, in not permitting him to see his dearest Alphonsine; for what good could have resulted from such a distressing interview.

The Duke de Longueville's words and actions by no means seemed to arise from the impulse of the moment: He seemed to have

have reflected upon the reception he ought to give his son, and to have acted in consequence.—The Marquis, in his turn, endeavoured to express the pleasure this happy meeting gave him, and the Duke seemed perfectly satisfied with a few formal phrases, which the Marquis thought very deficient in warmth and feeling.

While he was speaking, the Duke remarked the langour still pervaded his countenance, and his want of colour; therefore desired him to sit down, saying, “you look fatigued, my dear child; I am afraid your wish to gratify my impatience has induced you to travel faster than you ought to have done, in such dreadful weather; you positively look indisposed,” taking his hand very tenderly, while his countenance displayed so much anxiety, that the Marquis blamed himself very severely, for having accused his father of want of feeling.

The meeting between the father and son had not exactly answered the Abbé's expectations, though he would have been puzzled to have said where the fault lay : However, having been hitherto overlooked by the Duke, he seized this opportunity of attracting his notice, saying, " I entreat your Grace would not alarm yourself; all things considered, I am positively surprised his Lordship has borne his journey so well as he has ; the wonderful revolution he has so lately experienced, the grief he no doubt must have felt, when he parted from all his former friends, and the joy your Grace's kind reception must have occasioned him, have all combined to agitate his nerves and mind ;— I am convinced a few days calm repose will quite restore his Lordship's health."

" I hope you will prove a true prophet, Abbé," said the Duke ; " but when did you leave Wielbourg."

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The Abbé instantly took up his story from their departure from the Castle, and mentioned where they had slept each night;—adding, the Marquis was so anxious to reach Paris, that he had not ventured to dissuade him from making such long days, knowing also how much his Grace wished to see him.

“ You acted very imprudently, Abbé,” said the Duke, in a severe tone, which seemed habitual to him, “ in allowing the Marquis to leave Pont a Marque; I know he was not well enough to travel that day; and since you were in a quiet house, you ought to have stopt there; your wish to oblige us both might have been attended with the most dreadful consequences.”

The Abbé said, “ he hoped his noble patron would attribute the error he had committed to his fear of offending his young Lord:—Besides, he was really fearful an opposition to his wishes would have increased his disorder.”

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The Duke, without answering the Abbé, turned to the Marquis, saying, "I am afraid what I have attributed to mere fatigue, and the agitation our meeting actually has occasioned us both, has got a stronger hold.—My dear Alphonso, you must have some advice, and go to bed."

The Marquis looked surprised; the Duke smiled, and said, "I dare say the name I addressed you by struck you as odd, my dear son; 'twas the one that was given you when you was christened, by your maternal grandfather, who also bore it.—Pray by what appellation have you been hitherto distinguished?"

"I was not able to tell my name when I arrived at Wielbourg—your Grace; so I was christened again Alexis Wielbourg, by my worthy benefactor's desire, who did me the honour to officiate as my godfather, upon the occasion."

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“A good romantic sort of an old fellow, that same Baron, is he not?” said the Duke.

“One of the best men in the world, your Grace,” said the Marquis, very warmly;—at least such is his general character; and I have more reason than any body to say so.”

“Oh! I don’t mean to dispute the point with you,” said the Duke, in a sort of jealous piqued tone; “I commend your notions;—he has certainly been a very great friend to you; but we will not talk over the obligations he has laid us both under just now; you must retire immediately: Abbé, be so obliging as to conduct the Marquis to his apartment;—I have given proper orders; and I dare say, he will find every thing as comfortable as at the old Castle he has just quitted; have you brought any servants with you, my dear Alphonso? But I don’t suppose you were indulged so far?”

“ I never wanted for attendance, your Grace,” said the Marquis; Baron Wielbourg’s servants were always at my command, and any of them would have been discharged, had they been known to disobey me; but I thought, as your Grace sent me two, you did not wish I should bring any more with me.”

“ Oh! I should not have objected to any you might have been attached to, my dear Alphonso; I have provided you with a proper suite, but they should have made way for any others you might have chose to have brought with you.”

The Abbé, having rung the bell, it was answered by one of the Duke’s valets, who received orders to shew the Marquis de St. Cernin to the apartment that had been prepared for him, and to tell those servants, who had been particularly engaged to be about his Lordship’s person, to attend their mas-

ter; this done, to send for the family physician immediately.

The Marquis was going to make a few objections, but his Grace would not hear them; he merely wished to command in what so nearly concerned his own happiness; so the Marquis bowed and retired, attended by the Abbé, and preceded by the valet.—The young man was willing to attribute his father's behaviour to his affection for him; still it rather surprised him, when any thing ailed him at the Castle of Wielbourg, his dear Baron could hardly bear him out of his sight; but now, in less than half an hour after his arrival, he was ordered out of the presence of an *enraptured* father.—This was an appellation the Duke had bestowed upon himself, not with very great justice, the Marquis thought.—The Abbé roused him from the reverie these reflections had plunged him in, by pointing out to him the magnificence of the suite of apartments they were traversing.—The Marquis looked round him with

wonder and astonishment.—All that luxury could invent, art or genius could imagine, was displayed in the decorations and furniture of this truly superb habitation ;—but his thoughts soon reverted to the Castle of Wielbourg, and its amiable inhabitants ; and turning to the Abbé, he said, “ hitherto I never beheld such proofs of the power of riches ; and though I admire the ingenuity of the artist, I cannot think the exertion of his talents at all adds to the happiness of his employer ; for surely no sensible man can derive any pleasure from the constant contemplation of gilt cornices and painted cielings ; every surrounding object which strikes with admiration at the first glance, must soon be viewed with indifference, when habit has made them familiar to the eye.—At the Castle of Wielbourg, every thing was simply elegant ; and the people in that part of the world were struck with its magnificence ; but I can suppose it had a very different effect upon you, Mr. Abbé, coming from such a house

as this; but 'till your arrival, no man was so happy as myself."

Though the Abbé had been informed by the Baron how matters stood at the Castle, he could not conceive how any body could regret having left an ancient dreary mansion, or any thing it contained, when they had once seen the magnificent Hotel de Longueville, and really began to think the young Marquis's sentiments more calculated to suit a monk of La Trappe, than a nobleman of such consequence; was therefore afraid the Duke would often have to blush for this lately restored son; at least 'till he got rid of some of the antiquated rigid notions the old Baron had instilled into his mind; however, he kept his thoughts to himself.—Though an exceeding good man, it was one of his principles, never to offend his superiors, if he could avoid it, so he changed the discourse, and they soon reached the apartment which was prepared for the Marquis.—It was fitted up in a style exactly correspondent with the
grand

grand suite, and was in one of the wings which ran down on each side a very extensive garden.—The Abbé looked round him with an air of satisfaction, but made no remarks; and several refreshments, which the Duke had ordered, being brought in, he took upon himself to recommend what was most proper for the young man; and as soon as the Marquis was in bed, a request of his father's he complied with, more from a wish to enjoy his own private reflections, than from any inclination he felt to sleep; the Abbé wished him a good repose; desired the servants in waiting to darken the room, and to keep it very quiet, and then returned to the Duke, to whom he explained more fully what had occasioned the Marquis's indisposition and dejected looks, and concluded by assuring his Grace, he had no reason to be alarmed; the gaieties, and dissipation Paris afforded young men of his Lordship's rank, would effect the cure of his disorder much sooner than the prescriptions of its first physicians.

The Duke smiled disdainfully, and said, "I did not expect to find him all I could wish; he is a very fine young fellow, and all things considered, has a tolerable address;—" but if he thinks of obtaining my consent to marry this rusticated nymph, he will find himself strangely mistaken; what might have been very proper for the adopted heir of Baron Wielbourg, would very ill suit the Marquis de St. Cernin; but pray, Abbé, do you think either the Baron or his niece have formed any such ridiculous expectations?"

"I did not see the young lady, your Grace; but I am convinced the Marquis does not entertain the slightest hope of your Grace's consenting to gratify his wishes; and I must do the old Baron the justice to say, that in my presence he desired the Marquis to give up all thoughts of being nearer related to him, as he was certain such a match would never meet your Grace's approbation, and absolutely refused to let his Lordship see his

his niece, after he became acquainted with his rank."

"He acted right," said the Duke.——
 "Some of those old Germans have very high notions of honour; but I see plainly 'twas that refusal hurt the young man: I almost wonder how he was so obedient to the old fellow, after he found he was no longer a dependant upon his bounty."

"The Baron seemed to hold him in excessive subjection, your Grace," said the Abbé; "the obligations the Marquis thought he had laid him under, seem to have made a very deep impression upon his noble generous mind: I speak the sentiments of the Baron, your Grace; but I dare say, his Lordship will soon rejoice to find himself out of leading-strings; and in three months, I would venture to lay any wager, he will have forgot Mademoiselle Alphonse, and all his old preceptor's rigid notions.—In short, he will be every thing your Grace can wish."

“ Well, you seem to have obtained his confidence, in some respects, Abbé,” said the Duke; “ and as I wish very much to remain upon friendly terms with him, since he is thus miraculously restored to me, do you appear to be very much interested in his future felicity, and tell him you have founded me upon the subject nearest his heart, but you soon found I would never hear of his marrying a foreigner: This will damp all his hopes at once, and put him out of suspense.—You may add, by way of softening the intelligence, that his own understanding must convince him of the impropriety of my consenting to such an union.—Besides, was I so inclined, our monarch would not be pleased with the idea of a man of his rank chusing a Flemish wife; and he must be consulted upon the occasion.—You may also add, that having guessed, from the hints you have given me, his heart is not absolutely disengaged at present, I shall not propose any other lady to him for some time; I am not in any hurry to have him married; so he need not entertain

tain any apprehensions of my power, while he does but behave well."

The Abbé had hardly received his full instructions before the physician was announced, and his Grace thought it might be as well to inform the oracle of what he had learnt concerning the Marquis's complaint, before he allowed him to prescribe for him. He then accompanied him into his room, wishing to hear what passed, and to convince the Marquis of the anxiety he felt for his recovery; he addressed him with the utmost kindness, but seemed totally to attribute his complaint to fatigue.—The physician followed so good an example, only gently hinted, that excessive joy often affected the mind, and the body was sure to participate in the emotion; but assured his patient he would do very well; only ordered a few restoratives, and advised him to lay in bed that day, and not to leave his room the next, as the weather was very unfavourable for invalids. His Grace and the physician then took their

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leaves,

leaves, and the Marquis gave him great credit for his skill.

He kept his room for a few days, at the Duke's request, and the Abbé was his most constant companion, and very adroitly soon executed the commission his patron had given him.—The Marquis was not the dupe of the excessive zeal he pretended to have displayed in his cause, but easily discovered he had nothing to hope from the Duke's indulgence; he therefore determined to avoid mentioning Alphonse to his Grace, whom he saw regularly twice a day during his confinement; but he always seemed particularly careful not to start any subject relative to the Castle of Wielbourg, or its inhabitants.

The Marquis immersed from his confinement at the end of a week, and the Duke seemed anxious to initiate him into all the pleasures the capital afforded; he therefore introduced him to a numerous set of acquaintance,

quaintance, much about his own age and rank, all eager to find dissipation in a series of different amusements.—The Marquis was easily prevailed upon to join their parties;—he was glad to kill time, and gave into every folly with this intention, like the rest.

The Baron, with whom he regularly corresponded, never failed to represent to him, in the strongest terms, the folly of cherishing a passion for a woman the Duke would never consent to address as his daughter-in-law; and often assured him, Alphonse displayed more courage than he did, and submitted to her fate with becoming resignation, and that she had authorized him to say she would never accept of his hand, situated as he now was, having sense enough to know she was not born to fill so high a station.

These letters had the desired effect.—The Marquis found he had no hopes of being happy with the woman of his choice, therefore plunged headlong into all the dissipation

the capital afforded.—This was exactly what the Duke desired ; he therefore furnished him with ample means to gratify every wish he could form, and to enjoy every diversion that presented itself.—He never made any inquiries into his conduct, but merely desired him to be very careful of his health, as that was a blessing even riches could not always purchase.

Much about this time, the Marechal de Mercoeur, at his own particular request, was recalled from Spain.—He was so anxious to see this long lost nephew, that he thought every moment an age, 'till he had gratified his wishes.—He had wrote a most affectionate letter to the young Marquis, to congratulate him upon his restoration to his rank and fortune, and had concluded by hoping he would spend a great part of his time with him, when he returned to France, by way of making him amends for having been so long denied the pleasure of his company.

The Marquis was excessively pleased with this kind epistle.—There was a genuine frankness and warmth in every line, expressive of the excellence of the heart of the writer, and prepossessed him very much in his uncle's favour.

He communicated it immediately to the Duke de Longueville, who desired him to answer it directly, and to assure the Marechal he should always be at his orders.—This complaisance of the Duke de Longueville's, for a person he was by no means attached to, arose merely from his knowing how much the Marechal had it in his power to do for his nephew during his life-time, and how much he had to leave behind him.

In the course of a few months, the Marquis was appointed to the command of the regiment that had been under his brother's orders, 'till he died.—Whether this honour was conferred upon him out of compliment to his father or uncle, he was not informed; but

but he rather supposed he owed it to the latter, though the Duke de Longueville claimed all the merit of it, and informed the Marquis it was a duty incumbent upon him to pass a few days at Valenciennes, where the regiment was then in garrison; it was a compliment he owed the officers; and the men always expected a treat upon such occasions; therefore he could not do less than honour them with his company for a fortnight.

The Marquis was already fatiated with incessant dissipation, and often found a void in his heart, from which he had never been able to banish the image and remembrance of the lovely Alphonse; and when he learnt where his regiment was, the first idea that struck him was the proximity of Valenciennes to the Castle of Wielbourg; it was the beginning of April, the finest month in the year to enjoy the country; he was therefore anxious to set off, as he soon determined to pay the Baron a visit before he returned, though he kept his intentions a profound secret,

secret, guessing the Duke would not approve of his designs. Not that he was near so fearful of offending his father, as he had always been his worthy benefactor ; the former now treated him with the utmost indifference in private, though he allowed him to revel in every luxury and pleasure Paris abounded with, and was what many people thought, a very indulgent father ; and the Marquis was always careful not to disoblige him ; yet he neither loved nor feared him, as he still did the Baron, and often was really angry with himself, and fancied he was very deficient in gratitude to a parent who was always loading him with presents, and who at all times seemed very much attached to him ; yet he did not find he was at all happier than while he remained a mere dependant upon Baron Wielbourg's bounty ; and whenever he allowed himself time to reflect, which was not often, he would willingly have returned to that humble station, and have devoted his whole life to love and friendship.

Notwithstanding

Notwithstanding the indifference with which the Duke de Longueville often treated his son in their hours of retirement, he wished the world in general to suppose him doatingly fond of him; therefore always lavished the kindest expressions, and the most tender careffes, upon him in public.—The Baron's behaviour to him had been always uniform; but he was often puzzled to account for the caprice which was so often visible in his father's disposition: If he was troubled with the most trifling complaint, the Duke was seriously alarmed, and always insisted upon his having the first advice; and it was at those times alone the Marquis thought his father really loved him.—However, the excellent principles he owed to Baron Wielbourg's kind instruction, always induced him to pay the greatest deference to the Duke's wishes; and in the present instance, they perfectly coincided with his own.

The Duke gave a great dinner to many of his friends on the day the Marquis left Paris, wishing,

wishing, no doubt, they might endeavour to console him for his son's departure, as he chose they should be witnesses of the regret he felt at parting with him.

The Count de Courville, a young man much about the Marquis's age, who was the second in command, and allowed by all who knew him to be remarkably prudent, was, at the Duke's request, to accompany him to Valenciennes, to introduce him to all the officers, and to instruct him in those points of military etiquette his Lordship might still be deficient in.

The young men had been very intimate great part of the winter, and the Marquis was very much obliged to his father for having provided him with so agreeable a companion.—The Count was not much his inferior, in point of birth, but very much so in point of fortune; he no doubt, though not more entitled, was much better qualified for the post court favour had conferred upon the

the Marquis; but it would have been of little use to have murmured against such wise decrees; he liked his Colonel, though he would certainly have preferred having the advantage he held over him; but as he was still forced to obey, he bore the mortification with a good grace, and paid his court to his commander with the utmost assiduity, conscious he might be a gainer, and could not be a loser by his politeness; for the Marquis was very generous, now that he had it in his power to give way to the dictates of his heart.

The Count had promised the Duke in private, that he would take the utmost care of his Colonel, and reiterated his assurances publicly, when he took his leave.—The Marquis was astonished at the sorrow the Duke displayed upon the occasion, and was sorry to find his feelings so little in unison with his father's.—However, at last they were permitted to depart, and two days brought them to Valenciennes, as servants had been sent

sent forward with orders to procure them lodgings, &c.—The young Colonel was received with all due military honours, and the officers gave a grand ^{7th} fête on the very evening of his arrival, to welcome him to the garrison.—The belles of Valenciennes were equally eager to attract his notice, and all the nobility resident in the town or environs strove to outvie each other in politeness towards so great a man.

Such honours, and marks of respect and attention, were truly flattering to a young man of one and twenty; and though Alexis Wielbourg had early been taught not to set any value upon external advantages, and to estimate men by their virtues, not their rank, yet a winter spent, as already mentioned, among the first nobility the kingdom afforded, and the universal court he had always met with, had induced Alphonso, Marquis de St. Cernin to believe himself what he really was, a remarkable handsome man, and that his rank entitled him to the respect he met

met with ; but his heart and principles still did the greatest honour to the worthy Baron ; and after ten days spent in a continual round of pleasure, he imparted the design he had formed of visiting the Castle of Wielbourg to the Count, and asked him to be of the party, having reposed much confidence in him during their journey, and having acknowledged he still adored Alphonse, and that, was it in his power to dispose of himself, he would lead her to the altar before he returned.—The Count had no will but his Colonel's, and highly approved of his intentions, as he longed very much to see this handsome girl ; whose charms had made such a lasting impression upon the heart of the Marquis, that they merely told the officers they were going to spend a few days with a friend, and set out early the next morning, that they might reach the Castle before dark.

CHAP. IV.

IT has been observed, that the Marquis, or at least those who had observed his movements since he had mixed in the high world, had discovered a spark of vanity had long lain dormant in his bosom, which had considerably increased since he added to his other titles Colonel of the regiment of N——. Dress was now become an important study, and he particularly wished to appear to advantage in the eyes of the lovely Alphonsine.

fine.—This indeed he had often done before, during his residence at the Castle, but not exactly in the same way he did now:—He trusted then to his talents, excellent heart, moral character, and, above all, the strong interest he had in her heart; for neatness and simplicity was all he ever attended to in his appearance; but now the case was strangely altered; he had given into all the reigning fashions to oblige his father, the moment he arrived at Paris; and as he met with universal approbation, he soon began to pay very great attention to his person; and before the winter was out, he set several fashions.—The great world were astonished at the taste he displayed, when they reflected where and how he had been brought up; but soon concluded these shining talents were hereditary, and his opinion was now as much courted as his company.

He had long wished to be in the army, and had attained a much higher rank than his ambition had led him to aspire to at so early

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an age—He had remarked the different regimentals in the French army, and had thought some of them would not be the most favourable to his appearance; however, he was particularly fortunate in this respect;—his was white, in common with all the French infantry—and the cuffs, collar, and lappels, were black velvet; the epaulets and sword hilt gold.—This was universally allowed to be the most elegant and becoming regimental in France, and the Marquis thought he could not have been better dress'd, except he had been in one of the regiments of royal guards, who alone are allowed to wear gold lace.—It was not the fashion at Paris for officers (except those upon duty, or when the King's household troops were reviewed) to appear in any sort of uniform, either military or naval; therefore the Marquis had not appeared in his, 'till he made his entrée into Valenciennes, and there his vanity had been sufficiently flattered by the numerous compliments he had received from both sexes.—As his large double epaulets sufficiently de-

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noted the rank he held, he soon determined to appear at Wielbourg in this captivating dress.

The Baron had been taking his afternoon's walk among his poor dependants, and was upon his return home, when the Marquis and his friend arrived in sight of the curate's house.—The Marquis immediately pointed it out to the Count, telling him that was the place where he was left by the kind soul who had removed him from the Castle of Longueville.—The Castle, as has been already observed, was at the other extremity; it stood to the left, and had a double row of large elms, that formed a sort of avenue, which led to the great door.—The moment the Marquis caught sight of the trees, he felt an emotion he could not describe: Every thing served to remind him of Alphonsine, and he hoped a few minutes would bring him into her presence.—The moment the carriage turned up the avenue, he looked eagerly every way, in hopes of catching sight of the treasure
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he was once so near possessing ; but all of a sudden he called out, " Stop ! " saying, " here is my dear friend. "—The Count looked out, expecting to see the young lady his friend's mind was so full of, but only perceived an elderly gentleman standing in the foot-path among the trees, on the side he sat.—The door of the carriage was opened in a few seconds, and the Marquis jumped out ; the gentleman looked surprised ; but the moment he caught sight of the Marquis, he flung away a large cane he had in his hand, stepped hastily forward with open arms, exclaiming, " It is my dear Alexis, " and they were folded in each others arms in a moment.—The Count instantly guessed this was the Baron himself, and was not mistaken.—This truly good man, who had never retired to rest without thinking of the child of his adoption, or without praying for his future welfare, was now overjoyed ; he gazed upon him in raptures, and pressed him twice in his arms before he could speak.—He then welcomed his return to Wielbourg,

in the warmest and most affectionate terms, while the tears of joy, which rolled down his cheeks, evinced the sincerity of his words ;— and how different were the Marquis's sensations to those he felt when he was received and welcomed, after twenty years absence, *by his father.*

This was truly the paternal embrace ; and the Marquis was not less affected than the worthy Baron.—The Count, who had also alighted, stood enjoying the interesting meeting ; he made a sign to the servants to go forwards to the Castle, and was introduced to the good Baron as soon as the Marquis and him had given way to their mutual feelings, and was received with the utmost politeness.

The Baron said, “ he had been excessively surprised when he perceived such an elegant carriage turn up his avenue, and had kept under the shade of the trees, to discover who it was, if possible, as he was not in expectation of such distinguished visitors as the appearance

pearance of that seemed to announce.”——
They now proceeded up the avenue; the worthy Baron had put his arm within that of Alexis’, and seemed to have forgot the revolution that had taken place in his pupil’s fortune.—The Marquis was not so much at his ease; he longed, yet (knowing he could not address her as a lover) hardly dared to inquire after his beloved patron’s niece;—and they had advanced a few yards before he was able to pronounce the name of Mademoiselle de Cheylus.

“ She is not at the Castle, Alexis,” said the Baron; “ she is upon a visit in France.”

The Marquis made an involuntary, but sudden stop; and his looks convinced the Baron he was extremely disappointed; but the good man determined to give a gay turn to the discourse, and would not pretend to remark the evident change in the Marquis’s countenance; so said with a smile,

“ I do not think I should have been half so happy to see Alexis, had my niece been at home, though I am afraid one half of this honour was intended for her ; but I do not expect her home for some time.”

The Marquis made the greatest efforts to conceal his chagrin, without success—the Baron had guessed so perfectly right.—However, he said,

“ Happy as he should have been to have seen Mademoiselle de Cheylus, her absence would not prevent him from enjoying the company and conversation of his best friend, nor should he stay one hour more or less upon that account ; he guessed where she was ; and though nothing would have made him so happy as to have renewed his former vows, unfortunately his father’s views and his were very different.”

“ I always expected they would,” said the Baron ; “ his Grace only acts as I should, in his place.”

“ Not

“Not you indeed, my dearest, best of friends,” said the Marquis.—“Had my father resembled you, I should long since have been completely happy.”

The Baron and his pupil now entered into a serious argument upon the subject, and the Marquis at last reluctantly agreed, that as matters stood, it was quite as well Mademoiselle de Cheylus was not at the Castle, as they should both have been very awkwardly situated.

They now entered the ancient mansion, and found all the Baron’s servants assembled in the hall, to welcome their young master’s return, and hoped he was come to reside among them again.

The Marquis shook hands with every one, and told them, he wished it was in his power to follow his own inclinations, which would certainly fix him at Wielbourg for life.

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“ Oh ! that my poor dear young lady was but at home,” said the house-keeper. — —
“ The Baron gave her a look while she was speaking, which silenced her, and every one else upon that subject. — They looked at each other, and seemed excessively disappointed, though they were all very much flattered to find themselves so familiarly treated by so great a man.”

At last they were permitted to proceed into the very room where the Marquis had last seen his beloved Alphonse. — Had the good Baron made this reflection in time, he would most likely have led them into another ; for the first object that caught the Marquis’s eye, was her harpsichord, and the next the window where she was sitting, when he was reading to her on that memorable day when he left her, perhaps for ever.

He would very willingly, at that moment, have resigned both rank and fortune, could he
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he have obtained Alphonse's hand by such a sacrifice.

"What real happiness have I enjoyed since I quitted this peaceable abode," he said to himself: "How much more was I to be envied on that fatal day which tore me from the arms of my kind benefactor, and the woman I adored, than I am now."—An involuntary, but deep sigh, issued from his bosom, and he turned another way.

But the worthy Baron, guessing how his thoughts were employed, by way of giving them another turn, called to him to look at some alterations he had been making in his garden, wishing to take his attention from that particular window.

The Marquis turned round, and approved very much of what the Baron had done, without having hardly seen what he was desired to look at, or without knowing what he said.

The Baron, by way of allowing him time to recover from the dejection his late reflections had brought on, began to address the Count, who was delighted with the rural situation of the Castle, and expatiated very learnedly upon the taste the Baron had displayed in the disposition of his pleasure grounds.

The Baron had spent the early part of his life, it has been observed, in the Imperial service, and was a great judge of mankind in general; he therefore easily discovered the Count de Courville was a perfect courtier, and was doing all in his power to ingratiate himself into the good graces of his beloved pupil, whom he could not help acknowledging was very much improved in point of grace and manners since they parted; but perceiving his Lordship was trying to recall his scattered ideas, and to shake off the disagreeable reflections that had come across him, the Baron inquired after the Duke, from whom

whom he had been in a manner forced to accept of a very magnificent present.

Ostentation was one of his Grace's reigning foibles; he evidently laid under the greatest obligations to a man who did not court his favour, and who was almost his equal, nay, his superior in many respects;—but as he particularly wished the Baron to suppose he was doatingly fond of this child, he had so kindly brought up and educated, he naturally supposed the good man would judge of his love for his son by the value of the present he made him, which was merely a slight proof of his unbounded gratitude:—He wrote the Baron word by the bearer, of a most superb service of plate.

The Marquis said, “ he had left his father in perfect health at Paris about ten days before, and was certain, had he known of his intention to visit Wielbourg, he would have made him the bearer of a message to the Baron.”

“ Then you did not absolutely come from Paris hither, my young friend ?” said the Baron.

“ Only from Valenciennes, where my regiment now is,” said the Marquis, “ and I could not know I was so near the Castle of Wielbourg, without wishing to inquire after its owner’s health in person.”

“ I need not tell you—you have made me excessively happy,” said the Baron ; “ but allow me now to wish you joy upon your speedy promotion, already a Colonel, I perceive :—Why, in seven years more, at this rate, you will certainly be a Marechal de France.”

“ It was a rank I neither coveted nor expected, my dear friend,” said the Marquis ; but I was not consulted upon the occasion.”

“ You

“ You must excuse your old friend, Marquis,” said the Baron, “ when I say I do think high birth often supersedes merit in the French army.—Your Lordship, for example, who has never made a regular study of tacticks, fortifications, or in short, any of the sciences belonging to the profession you have adopted, has already obtained what is merely the reward of merit and seniority in Germany. Now, had I complied with your wishes to go into the Imperial service, notwithstanding the disadvantages you then laboured under, you would have rose by your talents, and I know you would not have been easy ’till you had been perfectly master of your *trade*;—therefore you would most likely have attained the rank you now hold, by the time you were forty.—I stopt two degrees short of it, you know.”

The conclusion of the Baron’s speech was rather more flattering than the beginning;—still this was language the Marquis had not been accustomed to of late; nor had he re-

flected upon the talents it required, to form a skilful officer ; he only knew he was like other young noblemen of his own rank, and many younger.—His late brother, for instance, had enjoyed as high a post :—How far they might surpass him, in point of military knowledge, he was no judge ; but he had been taught to believe men of his consequence could not submit to the controul of any officer beneath a major-general.

The Baron's remarks had therefore rather astonished him ; because, during his residence at the Castle, the good man would have been seriously offended, had any of his friends tried to humble Alexis Wielbourg ; yet he now evidently strove to lower his beloved pupil himself, and seemed hurt at the honourable distinction that had just been conferred upon him.

The Marquis felt rather piqued, and his countenance sufficiently shewed the Baron how little he approved of his censures.—This
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the Baron did not mind, as he thought rousing his pride might prevent his giving way to many other disagreeable reflections just then, and his admonitions might also prove of great use to him, and prevent him from giving way to vanity.

The Count, whose finesse equalled the Baron's penetration, thought he might as well seize this favourable opportunity to pay his court at this hitherto formidable rival's expence; he therefore immediately said,

“For my part, Baron, I cannot see any thing extraordinary in a nobleman of the Marquis's rank entering the service a Colonel.—I am convinced neither the Duke de Longueville, nor the Marechal Duke de Mercoeur, would have permitted him to have accepted of any inferior station; and as for his youth, why it is a strong recommendation, in my opinion; he will have so much the more time to devote to those studies you seem to think so necessary; but hang me, if
ever

ever I troubled my head about tactics or fortification ; and I believe ninety-nine out of a hundred of my brother officers will say the same ;—that is, if they are as honest as I am. The artillery officers always conduct sieges, you know, and a General always lays the plan of an attack ; so where is the use of a Colonel's puzzling his brains about things which may never be of any use to him.—It is time enough to study, when he obtains the Baton de Marechal ; but bravery and courage are all that is required in the Marquis at present ; and those qualities, you must know, he possesses in an eminent degree ; and I am certain there is neither an officer nor a soldier in the regiment of N—— who do not think themselves highly honoured in having so noble a commander, and who would not lay down their lives with pleasure to save his Lordship's ——.

“ Flattery is very alluring to the youthful mind, but it must be administered delicately to please indiscriminately, and the Marquis could

could not imagine such a body of men should be thus violently attached to him, merely because he was the Duke de Longueville's son, and hitherto they had had no proofs either of his courage or knowledge; he had merely learnt to give the word of command, and a few moments serious reflection, occasioned by the Count's fine panegyrick, convinced him of the justness of the Baron's remarks: So looking at the Count, he said,

"I mean to profit by one of your hints, my good friend; I am certainly young enough to learn, and I plainly see the necessity of obtaining a little more military knowledge than I at present possess; and I am certain, had my sovereign been apprised of my ignorance, he would not have bestowed so great a mark of his favour upon me; but it is still in my power to make myself deserving of it:—For I really am of your opinion, my dear benefactor, and think military rank ought to be the reward of merit and past services.—How hard it must be for ancient veterans

terans to see such boys as me appointed to posts they are so much more capable of doing honour to ; but it shall be my future study to deserve that love the Count flatters me I have already obtained.—I am afraid you do not think I have improved much since we parted, my best and first friend ; but I hope I shall not absolutely discredit the excellent education you gave me.”

The Baron was quite affected ; he caught the Marquis once more in his arms, saying, “ those are sentiments worthy my Alexis.—I am certain now you will do honour to your high rank.—I saw eighteen years service, and was in several sharp engagements, and remember, that presence of mind, and cool intrepidity, are far more useful in a battle than rash courage ; and upon such occasions, Alexis, should you ever be called into action, always pay the greatest attention to those veterans you may chance to have under your command ; for depend upon it, your life is very much in the power of your own men ;
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and as the Count very justly observes, there is not a brave foldier who would not hazard his own life in defence of an humane and generous commander."

"Thank you, my dearest friend, for this seasonable advice," said the Marquis.—"I have often heard you say great men would be better than they are in general, if they were more told of their faults; and I really believed they would; for they are so often accustomed to the language of adulation, that they soon begin to fancy they deserve all the praises that are bestowed upon them: This enervates their mind, and often leads them into gross errors; but I sincerely hope you will still keep a watchful eye upon your once highly favoured pupil, who never was more in want of your excellent advice."

"All my fears have ceased, Alexis," said the Baron; "so pray excuse the freedom with which I have treated you, and attribute it to its true cause; and believe me, no one
will

will rejoice more than I shall, when I see you distinguished by the baton you are so likely to obtain."

"The Count found he had not absolutely succeeded to his wish; but with the true dexterity of a courtier, he came into the Marquis's way of thinking, and was exactly of the Baron's opinion respecting an engagement; but the subject was soon dropt, and the evening was spent with tolerable gaiety, considering the absence of Alphonse.

The Marquis gave his benefactor his opinion of Paris, and the great world he was now become a member of, which amused the Baron excessively.—He agreed, he had been very dull since his young friend's departure, but the Marquis's entreaties could not prevail upon him to visit Paris; he was too old to form new acquaintances, he said, and to acquire new habits, but hoped often to see his pupil at Wielbourg, as he enjoyed his descriptions of Paris, and the various amuse-
ments

ments it afforded, much more than he should the reality.

They had agreed to spend the following day at the Castle, and to return the next to Valenciennes, as they were engaged to a grand fête in the evening, which was given solely upon the Marquis's account.

His Lordship took possession of his former apartment, which he found exactly in the same state he had left it.—The Baron would not have had a book or a drawing removed for the world.

Several beautiful landscapes were the productions of Alphonse's pencil.—The Marquis soon dismissed his valet, to enjoy the sight of them alone.—He retraced all the strokes and alterations that had been made to please him; and the more he admired them, the more his anxiety to see the charming Alphonse increased.—He had not asked the Baron where she was in France, because he thought

thought he knew, as she had a paternal aunt who had long been solicitous to obtain her company for a few months; but perhaps he might be mistaken in his conjectures, and he could not ask the Baron any more questions, after what had passed between them; and it was possible he might have sent her somewhere else, just to keep her out of his way, in case he paid him an unexpected visit; therefore he might set out upon a wild goose chase, and look very foolish when he reached his journey's end.

At last he came to a resolution to question the house-keeper.—She was, and always had been the friend of both him and Alphonsine, and she must be in the secret, if there was one; the Duke would not object to his protracting his stay at Valenciennes, or to any trip he might propose taking, so long as he was not acquainted with his real motives:—Besides, he particularly wished to excuse his abrupt departure from the Castle, and to inform the lovely Alphonsine what had prevented

vented him from taking leave of her ; for he could not tell what the Baron might have said to her.—In short, he found so many excellent reasons, why he ought to see her once more, that he determined to pay her a visit, if he could but discover the place of her abode, and at last went to bed full of these ideas ; but great part of the night having been consumed in admiring her drawings, and laying plans how to come to an explanation with this lovely creature, he did not awake 'till very late in the day, which deranged the plan he had formed of questioning the house-keeper before her master was stirring, and he blamed himself very severely for not having given orders to be called, having forgot he was no longer accustomed to rise at six in the summer, and before eight in the shortest days, but eleven had become an early hour of late, and he had made it near twelve on this morning.—The Baron had breakfasted long before, but he took a second meal with the two friends, and rallied the Marquis a little upon this fashionable habit

habit he had acquired, which he hoped he meant to lay on one side in summer, particularly in the country, as the morning air was much more conducive to health and spirits than a down bed, especially in warm weather. He had already lost part of his colour, but he did not look the worse for it; though it would be no addition to his countenance to part with any more.—Besides, he certainly ought not to give way to such lazy habits, now he had commenced soldier, as he would feel the bad effects of them very severely in a camp.—This all passed in a joke during their repast.

As the Baron was not fond of long walks, the Marquis said he would take a stroll with his friend, to shew him the environs.—They soon set out, and the Marquis visited several poor families, to whom he was very liberal, and received many blessings in return for his charity: They only returned just in time for dinner.—The Marquis was still eager to question the house-keeper, wishing to know

to a certainty, if possible, where Alphonse was: He had some hopes the Baron would have started the subject; he would then have put the question to him, but he did not even mention her name, which increased the Marquis's suspicions, that he wished to keep her retreat a secret, else why not have said at once where she was.—In France, was such a vague indefinite turn—She might be at Paris or at Marseilles; or even at a still greater distance than either: He therefore saw no means left to come at the wished-for information, but through the house-keeper; so he determined to go into his own room, and to write his request to the old lady, meaning to enclose a small mark of his bounty, by way of adding strength to his solicitations: He was convinced he should find an opportunity to slip his note into her hand unperceived by the Baron.

So after dinner, he left the room for this purpose; certain, if the old lady could not satisfy him, she would keep his request a secret

cret.—He was as concise as possible; but three double Louis, which he folded up in the letter, made every thing excessively clear.

He was fortunate enough to meet her as he was crossing the hall, on his return into the saloon; he made her a sign to stop, put his note into her hand, and his finger upon his mouth, by way of a hint, that secrecy was required, and left her.—As the good woman had brought him up, she perfectly understood him.

Dame fortune was in one of her best humours, and did not do her work by halves; for about half an hour afterwards, the Baron was sent for; a poor man in the village had met with an accident, and it was his particular desire that he might have immediate notice when any such event occurred.

At another time, the Marquis would have wished to have participated in such a charitable action; but he had an excellent excuse

for staying behind, as his friend must have been left alone, had he accompanied the Baron.

As soon as the Baron was gone, he told the Count he wanted to have a few minutes private conversation with the old house-keeper, and desired him to look out, as the windows of the saloon had a view of the road the Baron took, and to ring the bell in case he saw him returning, before he joined him again.

He then hurried to the good lady's apartment, and found her occupied in answering his letter; but she was very happy to see him, as she was certain she could not have wrote so well as she could talk.—The Marquis begged her to tell him all she knew, as speedily as possible, because the Baron was only stept out for a few minutes.—He gave her this hint, knowing how prolix the old lady was in general.

She assured the Marquis she was exceedingly happy it was in her power to inform him where her dear young lady was ; but he was obliged to listen to all that had happened in the family since his departure, before she came to the point.—She began by assuring him, her poor dear young lady took an absolute dislike to the Castle, after he left it ; so at first she got leave of her uncle to go and spend a couple of months at Malines with her cousin, the superior of the Begruene Convent.—However, soon after her arrival there, she shewed so much inclination to take the veil, that her cousin wrote to the Baron, to entreat he would permit her to receive her among the number of her novices ; but this the Baron would not hear of, as he was convinced it was not real devotion that led her to wish to embrace a monastic life.—— Besides, she was much too young to be a proper judge of the arts nuns always employed to obtain novices.—However, to cut my story short, my Lord, the old woman went on, my master set off himself to fetch her

her home again, for fear she should not obey his summons, if he only sent for her, and should be overpersuaded by a parcel of interested nuns, to increase their number; but he was determined not to give them a shilling, if she did absolutely refuse to leave the convent; but thank God she had more sense than all that came to—and home she came with the Baron, and overjoyed all were to see the dear soul; but she looked quite another thing to what she had used before you left the Castle, my Lord; she was wasted away to a skeleton almost, and looked as if she had lived upon bread and water all the time she was absent; but she took no delight in any thing when she was once more amongst us; never sat down to her music, nor never touched a pencil—only moped about from morning 'till night, and seemed weary of her very life; so the Baron agreed to her leaving the Castle once more, to see if change of place would do her any good; so he thought of sending her to her aunt's, whom your Lordship remembers, I dare say, supposing

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she would laugh her out of her melancholy notions ; so he wrote to the Countess de Verneuil, who did live at Cambrai, you know ; but she has left that place, because her husband has just been made commandant of Arras ; but perhaps your Lordship had heard that, as you live in France, and among so many great folks.

“ I cannot say I have,” said the Marquis, “ and should most likely have gone to Cambrai in search of her.”

“ Then I have been able to save your Lordship a journey, however,” said the old lady, and seemed to think this piece of intelligence worth the present she had received :— “ But your Lordship must remember, that proud lady’s visit here—let me see—she came here, for the very first time in her life, about the middle of last June, and gave herself a fine number of airs, God knows, and wanted to take Mademoiselle away with her then, you know.

“ Yes,

“ Yes, yes, I recollect all that passed upon that occasion,” said the Marquis.

“ Aye, aye, the Baron and your Lordship could not part with my young lady then;—but as my master thought a visit to Arras might amuse the poor dear young creature, why, as I was saying, he wrote to the Countess, to know if it would be convenient for her to receive her niece just then.—Well, this fine madam answered his letter immediately, and these were some of her words :—I don’t mind telling you—now you can look down upon such high-flown gentry :

“ I shall be very happy to receive my niece ; send her as speedily as possible ; I am obliged to see a great deal of company, and she will take some of the fatigue off my hands ; but I forbid your sending that young fellow, whom you brought up out of charity with her : Nor shall I permit him to visit her while she remains under my protection. I know how much you are wrapt up in him ;

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but depend upon it, he shall neither enter my doors, nor marry my niece, if I have power to prevent it."

"She ran on for a matter of two pages more, all in the same style; so this letter had like to have undone all again, and the Baron wrote her such a trimming answer, that nothing could be like it; and told her what a great man you was become, so she might lay aside all her fears of having your Lordship for a nephew, or of being troubled with your visits; and he thought he was conferring a great favour upon her, when he offered to send his niece to Arras.—My dear young lady saw both the letters; nay, she was kind enough to read them to me, for the matters of that; so for four or five days, all thoughts of her going to the Countess's was given up; but the haughty dame sent an express back, with her answer to master's last letter, and was so humble, that it would have done your heart good to have seen how her proud stomach was come down; and she pressed

pressed the Baron so hard to send her dear niece, and promised to make every thing so agreeable, that at last master accompanied our dear young lady to Bruxelles himself, and put her under the care of a French lady, who was going to Paris, and who was to leave her at Arras as she went through :—It is much about three weeks ago, and master is rather angry, because he has heard from her but once ; but I hope your Lordship will keep all I have told you a secret ; for master gave me a hint this very morning, before your Lordship was up, while he was giving me his orders about dinner, in case you should ask me where Mademoiselle was, to say I did not know ; so pray, if you should see Mademoiselle, don't tell her how you found her out—for it might come round to master's ears, and I should never be forgiven as long as the world is a world ; though God knows I cannot see any good can arise from trying to keep two true lovers a-part ; and I am sure if your Lordship could make my young lady a queen, she is deserving of the honour."

H 4

" You

“ You may depend upon my discretion,” said the Marquis ; “ and believe me, was it in my power, I would confer my name and title upon Mademoiselle de Cheylus to-morrow ; but I am not my own master, and have every thing to dread from my father’s power.—Were I to act contrary to his inclinations, he might not only dissolve our marriage, and separate us for ever, but would probably confine me during his life time.”

“ The Lord have mercy upon us,” said the old woman ; “ you make my blood run cold.—To be sure his Grace cannot be made of flesh and blood, like other folks ;—pray excuse me ; but I am sure his son don’t take after him.—I never saw such a house as this was after you had left it : I had declared I would have danced for the last time on your wedding-day ; but now I am sure I shall never try again.”

If the Marquis had not felt a great deal during the former part of the old woman’s story

story, he would hardly have been able to keep his countenance at the conclusion.—The bell rung just as she was going to recommence her lamentations, and put her into a most terrible flurry; her master was certainly returned, and he would find out where his Lordship was; but the Marquis set her heart at ease, by assuring her it was his friend who had rung, and that the Baron was only in sight.—The Marquis had joined the Count some seconds before the Baron came in: He immediately rang for the house-keeper, to give her some orders concerning the poor man he had been to visit.—She obeyed the summons in fear, and trembling, like all guilty people.—Her countenance expressed her emotion when she entered.—The Baron very innocently asked her what ailed her.—She had just been hearing an account of the poor man's accident, she said. This excuse passed current, and she was ordered to attend him directly, and to give proper orders for what he might want.—The Marquis put a few Louis into her hand, as

she left the room, which he desired she would present the sick man, in his name, with his sincere wishes for his speedy recovery.—She courtied, and withdrew, and the Baron seemed highly gratified by this fresh proof of the benevolence of his pupil's disposition.

The Baron then turned to the Marquis, saying, “ I never reflected, my young friend, ’till I was upon my return home just now, to ask you if you have any relation a commander of Malta; for I shall never forget the joy you expressed, though you could hardly speak, the first time you saw the Commander de Sultzbach, and he certainly reminded you of some body you was very fond of.”

“ Of my worthy great uncle, I fancy, my dear Sir,” said the Marquis, who was then only the Commander d’Ormonville; “ I have not yet had the happiness of seeing him, though I have received several very kind letters from him; he is now the Marechal Duke de Mercoeur, and has been three
years

years upon an embassy at the Court of Madrid; but he is now upon his return home, and is as impatient to see me as I am to renew my acquaintance with him, though I cannot say I retain the slightest recollection of him."

"He was one of your greatest favourites, I am convinced," said the Baron, "when you left the Castle of Longueville; and I am very happy to find I have not been mistaken in my conjectures."

The evening soon slipped away, and the Baron wished very much his pupil could have prolonged his visit; but he was obliged to part with him in the morning.—Their regret was mutual; but as they both promised to correspond with more regularity than ever, they felt half consoled by the idea.—During their journey back to Valenciennes, the Marquis told his friend what he had learnt from the house-keeper.

The Count gave him joy, and hoped he did not intend to vegetate much longer at Valenciennes; tried to turn a few of the Baron's rigid notions, as he called them, into ridicule; but as the Marquis did not countenance these attempts to lower his best friend, either before his face or behind his back, the Count found it would not do, so very prudently gave up the project, and they agreed to set out for Paris the Monday following.—The Marquis agreed with his friend in his opinion of Valenciennes: The town was dull, and the nobility who inhabited it stupid and formal, and too poor to visit the capital, or to enjoy life even in a provincial town, some few excepted; and those were so proud of the pre-eminence their riches gave them, and gave themselves such airs, because they had been twice in their lives at Paris, that they were as insupportable as the others; as the great French nobility always held these sort of petty gentry, who inhabited the different provincial towns, in the greatest contempt, 'tis not to be wondered at, the Marquis's

quis's having imbibed a few of the notions the circle entertained, among whom he moved.

He was very glad to hear his regiment was to be removed to Lille, which is a remarkable gay town in the autumn.—He should not mind spending three months with it there; but he should die of ennui in half that time, he was convinced, at Valenciennes.

These four days hung very heavy upon the Marquis's hands, though there were different fêtes given every evening, either by himself or the nobility of the town; but his thoughts all centered in Alphonine;—he thought nothing could have been more fortunate for him than the removal of the Count and Countess de Verneuil:—He must have made a long circuit to have visited Cambrai; but Arras was all in his road, and his friend and him arrived there, as they intended, on the Monday evening.

CHAP.

C H A P. V.

THE Marquis thought it would be best to take both Alphonse and her aunt by surprise, though he had no doubt but the latter would be as highly flattered to receive a visit from the Duke de Longueville's son, as she would have been shocked to have seen Alexis Wielbourg at her house.—The Countess and the Marquis had amused themselves during their journey, notwithstanding the Countess's looks and behaviour, and the efforts she would

would make to atone for the impoliteness with which she had treated his Lordship during her visit at the Baron's.—They agreed to make a little alteration in their dress, and then proceed to the Commandant's Hotel. These posts were generally distributed among the country nobility ; and though their revenues seldom exceeded five hundred pounds sterling a year, still they affected to live in a great style ; had large houses, and sometimes kept their carriages, if they had any private fortune besides ; and as they held great power, they were usually very much feared, but were seldom beloved.—The Count de Verneuil had attained the rank of major in the French army, and at fifty had been decorated with the cross of St. Lewis ; and having some powerful friends at Paris, he had been made Commandant of Arras : He had married, some twenty years before, Mademoiselle de Cheylus, who was the second daughter of the Viscount of that name, who had also three sons, the youngest of whom had married Baron Weilbourg's sister. Mademoiselle

demoiselle Angelique de Cheylus was exceedingly handsome, and that had induced the Count de Verneuil to offer her his hand; for she had no fortune, and her eldest sister had taken the veil as a resource against starving.—She had been dead some time; so had the Viscount and his three sons; therefore the Countess was the only surviving relation of the lovely Alphonine, Baron Wielbourg excepted.

Chance merely had directed this lady's steps to Wielbourg the preceding summer, though perhaps curiosity had some share in the visit she paid the Baron.—She was going to Spa, and had heard enough of the worthy Baron to make her despise him; convinced, that a man who led so recluse a life, and of Flemish extraction, must be a horrid stupid being; but as she had no children of her own, and had heard her niece was a remarkable fine girl.—She thought it would be doing a very charitable action to take the poor child back with her to Cambrai, where
she

she would have an opportunity of seeing a little of the world, and might pick up a husband, as she had done ; and at all events, if she did not answer her expectations, she could but send her back again.

Alphonse more than answered all the ideas she had formed of her ; and the Countess was absolutely astonished to find her so accomplished, considering the education she supposed she must have received in an old gothic Flemish Castle, under the direction of a formal old fellow.—Her being remarkably handsome, did not surprise her.—She was a Cheylus ; the name was sufficient to insure her being a beauty.—She had forgot, it is supposed, her elder sister took refuge in a convent, because she was so ugly, that there was not the slightest chance of her ever obtaining a husband.

Had the Countess ever shewn any regard for her niece before, the Baron might possibly have consented to the request she made,
though

though he did not think Alphonse was likely to improve much under her tuition; but all things considered, he did not see why he was to deprive himself of the pleasure his niece's company afforded him, to oblige a person who had hitherto thought her very much beneath her notice.

The Countess, finding her kind offer by no means met with the approbation she expected, entreated the Baron would take time to reflect, before he absolutely decided to refuse his consent to her request; giving him to understand that Alphonse was now at an age to mix in the gay world; and where was she likely to form such eligible acquaintances as in her house, and under her protection.—She saw all the first company Cambrai afforded; she would sleep at the Castle once more, on her return from Spa, and hoped, by that time, he would be more inclined to oblige her.

The Baron said, he should be very happy to see her whenever it suited her, but gave her no hopes that her second visit would prove more successful than her first.

The Countess did not leave Spa 'till the latter end of September.—She called at Wielbourg, as she had promised, and again took an opportunity to enforce the request she had made before.—The Baron certainly could not object to her niece's spending the winter with her.—She would return quite another thing, though she would most likely meet with some match suitable to her birth, before the spring; and this idea must be another inducement to him to consent to her emerging from the solitude in which she had hitherto lived.

The Baron had reflected upon the Countess's proposal during her absence; but having minutely observed the looks and actions of his two pupils, he was convinced they would be miserable apart; he had therefore determined

determined to do all in his power to make them happy; he would leave them a handsome competence, and they had no other expectations or dependance; and he cared very little about what the world might say.—If his beloved Alexis was unfortunate in his birth, he possessed a noble generous mind, and was capable of making any woman happy.

He therefore imparted his intentions to the Countess, though he did not mean to let the young people into his secret immediately, but he hoped this would convince her he did not wish his niece to seek for a splendid alliance at the expence of happiness, and assured her very sincerely, he could not part with the lovely girl.

The Countess could not listen to the Baron with common patience, to think of bestowing a grand-daughter of the Viscount de Cheylus's, and her niece, upon a base-born wretch, the offspring of—nobody knew who,
and

and whom he had educated, fed, and cloathed out of charity, was an affront she could not put up with tamely ; and had she possessed the power, she would certainly have taken her niece from under the care of so foolish an old man, who was grown childish, she began to think, or he could not have formed so ridiculous a project.

She reprobated the notion in the strongest terms ; protesting, if her niece did marry the beggar's brat, she would never acknowledge her for a relation, and told the Baron it was a shameful abuse of the trust his sister had reposed in him, to allow her daughter to throw herself away in such a manner ; their mutual love was all a farce, and it was ridiculous to encourage such romantic notions : The boy was old enough to get his own bread now, and ought to be sent out into the world ; and at Cambrai, her niece would soon forget the fellow ; therefore, the only prudent step that remained, was to separate them as speedily as possible.

This

This the Baron did not chuse to do ; the Countess therefore left the Castle in a pet, without even deigning to take leave of her niece : Only told the Baron, when they parted, if he chose to give up his romantic notions, she should still be happy to see the child.

How the Baron did act, is already known ; but he was rather surpris'd when his niece, soon after her return from Malines, propos'd paying this lady a visit, knowing she had conceived a dislike to her, almost amounting to aversion, during the two visits she paid at the Castle, which arose from her behaviour to her then beloved Alexis ; but as the Countess had boasted very much of the brilliant circle she moved in, and of the gaieties of Cambrai, the Baron, thinking a little dissipation might weaken the desire she still had to take the veil, and might enable her to bear with more fortitude the severe disappointment she had experienced, readily consented to her wishes, and wrote accordingly to the Countess.

Countess.—The result of what past between them is already known; we shall therefore now return to the Marquis and his friend, whom we left at their toilette.—Having adorned as much as they thought necessary for travellers, they set out on foot for the Commandant's Hotel, which they were informed, was in the great square.—It was just dusk when they arrived at the gate; the Count de Verneuil did not keep a porter, but the servant, who answered the door, informed the young gentlemen the Countess was at home. He was desired to announce the Count de Courville.—The Marquis, who was spokesman, took the precaution, fearful Alphonsine might retire, if she was with her aunt, when she heard his name, and it was possible she might not be very easily prevailed upon to see him, after what had past, and he was determined to excuse himself, if he could do no more.—His anxiety was very great, as the happy moment approached: He walked into the room first, and looked eagerly round him as he advanced, but, to his no small disappointment,

appointment, the Countess was alone, and preparing to go out.—She did not know the Count de Courville, but instantly recognised the young man she had so much despised at Wielbourg, and whom she had then hardly deigned to address. She was rather embarrassed for a few seconds ; but a bright thought struck her, and she advanced to welcome him with a vivacity that would have been much more becoming in her niece, saying,

“ Alexis, I am very glad to see you ; how are you ? This is really kind of you : How does our good Baron do ?

The Marquis was amazed—as well he might ; but he instantly found she wished him to believe her still in ignorance of the alteration that had taken place in his circumstances, that she might have an opportunity of convincing him how politely she would have received Baron Wielbourg’s once despised pupil.

He

He did not find himself inclined to humour her so far, said rather coolly, "I understood, ma'am, the Baron had informed you."—He would have proceeded, but the Countess, finding her pretty finesse had failed of its intended effect, interrupted him, saying,

"Upon my word, Marquis, I hardly know how to excuse my familiar address.—The joy I felt at seeing you, made me forget the intelligence the Baron favoured me with.—Your not being announced, altogether quite confused me; and the name I had learnt to esteem you under, presented itself first to my imagination; but pray allow me now to wish your Lordship joy; this is an honour I little expected; but let me entreat your Lordship would be seated.—The Count de Courville, I presume, turning to his companion.—Pray, gentlemen, do me the favour to sit down.—I cannot think what came across me, when I caught sight of you.—Marquis, you certainly must have thought me wild; but I am so intolerable giddy—I am often seriously

angry with myself; for it is not more than three days ago, that I sat and listened to your praises for a couple of hours, or more.—A cousin of the Count de Verneuil's has lately married the daughter of a nobleman, who resides chiefly at Valenciennes, and he is just returned with his wife from a visit they have been paying her father, the Baron de Courcelles; and I protest, from the praises this lady bestowed upon your Lordship, I thought it was fortunate for our cousin your Lordship did not arrive sooner; and I have half a mind to shew you a letter, Marquis, I received but yesterday, from another of my Valenciennne friends; but now I think of it, I won't say another word 'till you are both seated.—I will send for the Count; he will be as happy as I am: Do you know, I had almost persuaded him to undertake a journey to the old Rookery at Wielbourg, to fetch my niece, merely for the pleasure of seeing your Lordship en passant at Valenciennes."

At last the Countess ceased speaking.—If it had not been for the disappointment the young men had met with, they would have had some difficulty to have looked serious; but from what she had said, Alphonse was not in the house.—The Marquis, who had taken a seat as well as his friend, said,

“ Really, your Ladyship has surprised me; I thought Mademoiselle de Cheylus was here.”

“ Upon my honour she is not, my Lord,” said the Countess; “ but I shall be half-offended with you, if you don’t take care; for I find I must place the honour of this visit to my niece’s account.”

“ The hopes I entertained of seeing Mademoiselle de Cheylus, is almost the only excuse I can alledge for intruding upon your Ladyship at so unseasonable an hour,” said the Marquis; “ but I have been at Wiel-

bourg, and learnt there she was upon a visit to you."

"Why—mercy upon me!" said the Countess, "was there ever such a strange queer mortal as that old Baron; why his whole pleasure seems to consist in teasing young people; he kept the sweet girl locked up in some of his out-houses, I presume, while your Lordship was there. Alphonse was to have been here a month ago, but she wrote to me from Bruxelles, where her uncle had taken her to make some purchases upon the occasion, that her intended journey hither was unavoidably postponed for a few weeks, and that she would let me know the moment she was at liberty. I guessed it was some whim of the old fellow's, and being rather piqued, did not answer her letter, and have been expecting either to see or hear from her every day since; though I must say, I easily accounted for the delay, after I heard your Lordship was at Valenciennes; but now I am seriously offended with the old fellow,

fellow, for playing your Lordship this pretty trick ; and I assure you I shall write him my sentiments very freely upon the occasion."

" I must entreat your Ladyship would not give yourself that trouble upon my account," said the Marquis, " as the Baron merely told me his niece was in France ; and I thought myself at such a certainty, as to where she was, that I asked no more questions, having learnt par hazard the late promotion of the Count—I knew where to find your Ladyship."

" But it was certainly deceiving your Lordship to tell you she was gone any where," said the Countess, " when she was under his own roof all the time. I only wish I had been there ; we would have found her out between us ; but write I must, Marquis ;—for I look upon myself as compromised in the affront you have received.—I think I ought to have some little authority over my niece, and I shall require an explanation."

“ You must certainly do as you please, Countess,” said the Marquis ; “ but as I said before, the Baron merely told me Mademoiselle de Cheylus was in France, and I could not think of passing through the town in which I supposed she resided, without calling to pay my respects to her.—Had she been, as your Ladyship seems to think, at the Castle, I must have seen her.”

“ Oh ! my dear Marquis, you are not half so well acquainted with that old fellow’s capricious whims as I am,” said the Countess ; “ I hope you mean to spend a few days at Arras : In that time, I will clear this enigma up to your satisfaction.”

“ If any thing could induce me to break through the resolution I have formed,” said the Marquis, “ it would be your Ladyship’s polite offer ; but I have promised my father to be at Paris to-morrow evening.—It is, notwithstanding, in your Ladyship’s power to confer a singular obligation upon me.”

“ I

“ I entreat, then, your Lordship will put me to the test,” said the Countess.

“ Should Mademoiselle de Cheylus be permitted to pay this long-expected visit, will your Ladyship allow me to address ten lines to her, under cover to you, as I have really something of importance to say to her ?”

“ I not only promise to permit you to address ten lines to her, Marquis, but ten letters—nay, ten times ten, if you wish it ;—and you may depend upon the earliest information of her arrival ; and if the old fellow should be capricious enough not to let her leave the old Castle at last, I will take a journey thither, on purpose to convey her any letters your Lordship may honour her with.”

The Countess was in such spirits, and so complaisant, that it is to be presumed she already saw her niece Duchess de Longueville in imagination, and herself removed to

Paris; her husband perhaps in the ministry; nay, it is impossible to guess what brilliant projects she had formed, upon the strength of this noble alliance.

“I presume a line addressed to your Lordship at l’Hotel de Longueville will reach you? But I am really ashamed to acknowledge I do not know in what part of Paris it stands.”

“In the Rue de l’Université Fauxbourg St. Germain,” said the Marquis; “and your Ladyship does not know how happy your kind condescension has made me.”

“Oh! I am not troubled with any of those rigid notions that characterise the old Flemish Baron, my Lord,” said the Countess with a gracious smile.

The Marquis and his friend now rose to take their leave.—The Countess pressed them very much to stay supper, and would have

have sent her excuses where she was going ; but the Marquis had not forgot the uncivilities Alexis Wielbourg had met with from her during her visits at the Castle, and what he had learnt from the house-keeper, was still fresh in his memory ; therefore, it was only his ardent wish to see Alphonse carried him to her Hotel, and his desire to gain some intelligence concerning the lovely lady, induced him to treat her with so much politeness ; but to have accepted her invitation to supper, would have been affording her too great a triumph, he thought ; particularly as he was not to be gratified with a sight of the magnet that had drawn him to her house.

As soon as the Count and him were in the street, the Marquis began to form conjectures, and to reflect upon what had passed, there was scarcely a possibility of Alphonse's being still at Wielbourg ; for had the Baron wished to have concealed her, the old house-keeper certainly would not have endeavoured to have misled him ; no, the Baron had not

chose any body should know where she really was ; he might have once intended to have sent her to Arras, and so had given out among his household she was gone there, but had certainly changed his mind : She was most likely still at Bruxelles, where she had wrote from ; but how to find her out, he was at a loss to determine. He could not suppose she was returned to Malines, as the Baron had a particular dislike to nuns and friars ;—therefore it was not probable he would permit his niece to seclude herself from the world, merely to increase what he looked upon to be a very useless set of beings ; he had more likely put her under the protection of some lady, of whom he had a higher opinion than of the Countess de Vernieul.—However, nothing more could be done at present. The Countess had interested herself in what she looked upon as a common cause, and there was little doubt but she would discover her retreat, if possible.—He imparted his reflections, as they occurred, to the Count, who now said,

“ Always

“ Always set a woman to find out a secret, my Lord.—I would bet any sum you will have news in a week.”

“ I wish I may,” said the Marquis ; “ but if I don’t learn where she is in a couple of months, I will pay Spa a visit, and I will visit every convent in Flanders and Brabant, under some pretence or other.”

“ Oh ! a golden key will greatly facilitate your entrees,” said the Count, “ and I am sure a tolerable large bribe will lull the conscience even of a Lady Abbess.”

The two friends sat up very late, laying plans and forming conjectures, and next morning they pursued their journey.—They arrived at Paris between six and seven, and both alighted at the Hotel de Longueville, but were immediately informed the Duke had set out only a few minutes before, for the Hotel de Mercoeur, and had desired the Abbé de Mondevergues would send the Mar-

quis after him, if he reached Paris before ten o'clock, as his great uncle was just arrived, and was all impatience to see him.

This intelligence pleased the Marquis excessively.—He had long wished to see this uncle, whom he must have been very fond of in his infancy, he thought, from the incident that had occurred at Wielbourg soon after his arrival there, and which the Baron had recalled to his memory, so ordered his carriage to be got ready immediately, made a trifling alteration in his dress, and set his friend down in his way to the *Chaussée d'Antin*, where the late Duke de Mercoeur had purchased an Hotel upon his daughter's marriage, which the Marechal had inhabited since his death.—The moment the Marquis alighted, he was shewn into a very elegant saloon, where the Marechal was sitting, surrounded by a number of his friends, who had all crowded to see him the moment they heard of his arrival; but when the Marquis de St. Cernin was announced, the Marechal
started

started up, hastened forward, and met the Marquis in the middle of the room.—The Duke de Longueville had rose at the same moment, meaning to introduce his son, but he was too late. The Marechal caught his nephew in his arms, saying,

“ Welcome, my long-lost child—this is a pleasure I little expected ever to enjoy ; welcome ten thousand times to the Hotel de Mercoeur, and to the arms of your uncle,” again embracing him.

This affectionate and unceremonious reception was truly flattering to the Marquis. It brought the amiable Baron Wielbourg strongly to his mind, and he as warmly returned his uncle’s embrace, and partook of the worthy man’s emotions, who really seemed to view him with rapture.

The Duke de Longueville was excessively affected by this meeting ; at least he took out his handkerchief to conceal his tears or his
face ;

face; for every actor has not the absolute command of his countenance, and his Grace seemed to wish more than ever to display the violent love he bore his son.

He caught him in his arms as soon as the Marechal allowed him an opportunity; and after devoting a few moments to speechless rapture, or his joy perhaps deprived him of utterance; but it is most probable no expressions sufficiently tender for the present occasion presented themselves to his mind just at first; at last he protested he had not enjoyed a moment's pleasure since he had been absent, and was amazed even now to think how he summoned fortitude enough to part with him; but if he had staid one day more at Valenciennes, he should have set out in search of him.

The Duke's behaviour had often puzzled the Marquis before; but this time his Grace so over-acted the part he meant to perform, viz. that of a most tender father, that the
young

young man was no longer the dupe of his affected love ; his Grace had certainly taken a very tender leave of him before a great many witnesses ; but he had only wrote to him once during his absence ; and if his letter had not begun my dear son, and ended your affectionate father, he should have supposed it the production of the Minister belonging to the War Department ;—as it merely contained a series of military instructions, but now it should appear the Duke had hardly been able to support the burthen of his existence without this son of his affection.

The Marquis tried to conceal the surprise his father's excessive joy occasioned him, and to express the real joy he felt to see his kind uncle ; the company presuming the Marechal and the Duke might wish to enjoy the Marquis's conversation uninterrupted, all took their leave ; and as soon as they were alone, the Marechal said he was excessively desirous to hear the Marquis's own account of his

past life ; but as they were both too much fatigued then, he should postpone his curiosity for a few days.—The Duke de Longueville had always been too much affected by the bare recollection of the past, and by the dreadful idea of what his son might have suffered, to listen to the melancholy story, but now asked him a few questions concerning his journey to Valenciennes, how he was received by his regiment, &c.—The Marquis's answers pleased him excessively ; but having satisfied his father's curiosity, the young man mentioned his visit to Wielbourg.—This intelligence rather startled the Duke ; all he had learnt from l'Abbé de Mondevergues rushed into his mind, and his proud ambition instantly took the alarm.—“ You went to Wielbourg, my dear Alphonso,” said he, with evident marks of surprise and disapprobation.

The Marechal, who was very differently affected by the intelligence, and who perceived the displeasure the Duke's countenance expressed,

expressed, instantly said, "you did very right, Sir; how does your worthy benefactor do; I am sure he was happy to see you; and it would have been very ungrateful, had you omitted paying him your respects, when you had it so much in your power."

The Duke de Longueville's brow was instantly smoothed, and he said, in a pleasant tone, very unlike the one he had spoke in a few moments before, "I commend your notion, my Alphonso; you certainly conferred a great honour upon the Baron; but his former kindness justly entitled him to such a mark of your respect, notwithstanding the pains I took to discharge, as far as laid in my power, the obligations the good man has laid us both under."

The Marquis mentioned the kind reception he had met with, and the polite inquiries the Baron had made after his Grace.

"I

“I am happy to hear the old fellow is well,” said the Duke with a smile; “but pray how does the niece do? Did not she also give you a kind welcome.”

“I had not the pleasure of seeing her, your Grace,” said the Marquis.—“She was upon a visit at a relation’s.”

The Duke had given his son so much occasion to doubt his sincerity, that it instantly occurred to the Marquis his Grace had wrote to Baron Wielbourg, to inform him of his intended journey to Valenciennes, and to advise him to send his niece out of the way for a short time, in case he should pay the Castle a visit when he was so near.—This, at first bare suspicion, soon amounted to a certainty in the Marquis’s opinion.—Alphonse had been kept in ignorance as well as himself, most likely; though, had she known why her uncle wished her to leave the Castle, she must have complied with his desires.—However, he placed great dependance upon the
art

art and finesse of the Countess de Verneuil; she would get to the bottom of the affair, if possible; and she was evidently a staunch friend to both him and Alphonse.—He was revolving all this in his mind, and quite lost in thought, when the Marechal looked at him archly, and gave him a slap on the shoulder, saying,

“ There is a lady in the case, I find, Alphonse; but I will not listen to your confession to night.—I shall be very busy for a few days, giving up my accounts and settling my affairs at Paris; but early in the next week I mean to set out for Burgundy, and you will very much oblige me, if you will accompany me thither.—I know it is an indiscreet proposal, to make a young man of your age to exchange the gaieties of the capital at this season, for the society of an old man and a solitary Castle; but—I must visit my old friends and tenants, and your presence would enliven me so much, that I should do the honours of my house with ten times more spirit.—Besides, I am
impatient

impatient to introduce you to several amiable families, who constantly reside in that beautiful part of France."

The Marquis replied, " he particularly enjoyed the thoughts of such a jaunt, if the Marechal's proposal met with his father's approbation."

The Duke de Longueville could not refuse his consent to any thing that would oblige the Marechal, though he should certainly feel the loss of his son's gay conversation ; but he should console himself with the reflection, that this journey would be very conducive to his health.

It was therefore agreed, before they separated, that the Marechal and the Marquis should leave Paris on the Tuesday following.

C H A P. VI.

ON the day appointed, which proved to be a most delightful morning, in the middle of May, the Marechal de Mercoeur and his nephew set out for Burgundy. They had not proceeded a mile on their road, before the Marechal entreated the Marquis would gratify his curiosity, which he had hitherto suppressed, as he wished to be acquainted with all that had befallen him, at least every thing he could remember, after he was taken from the Castle de Longueville.

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The Marquis immediately related all that he had learnt from the worthy curate and his excellent friend, not forgetting the predilection he had displayed in favour of the Commander of Malta. This childish trait brought tears into the Marechal's eyes.—“ Poor little fellow,” he could not help exclaiming: “ Yes, it was me you expected to see, for you were remarkably fond of me; and I never loved a child half so well in my life.—I can suppose how you were disappointed, but pray proceed; you do not know how much I am interested in every thing that concerns you.”

The Marquis continued his story, recapitulating, with the greatest warmth and energy, the different marks of kindness and affection he had received from the Baron, and concluded with the last extraordinary proof of his generous intentions in his favour, acknowledging how severely he felt the sacrifice his father exacted, as he still adored Alphonse, and should, to the last moment of his existence. The Marechal smiled affectionately

fectionately at the fervour with which his nephew expressed himself, and said,

“Why, independent of her own merits, Alphonso, I can suppose her being niece to the generous amiable Baron Wielbourg, is sufficient to inspire you with the most tender sentiments in her favour.—You have not seen her since the Abbé de Mondevergues’ arrival at the Castle.”

“No, my dear uncle,” said the Marquis ;
 “and I strongly suspect my father was the occasion of the last disappointment I experienced. I do think he guessed my intentions of visiting Wielbourg, and wrote to the Baron, who too readily gave into his wish of keeping the lovely Alphonine out of my sight.—He then entered into the detail of all that had past between him and his worthy friend upon the occasion ; what he had learnt from the house-keeper, which had occasioned his visit to the Countess de Verneuil, and what was the result of that step, concluded by saying,

ing, " he was amazed he had not yet heard from the Countess, but thought she had very likely undertaken a journey to Wielbourg, to discover where her niece was."

The interest the Marechal seemed to take in every thing that concerned him, and the affection he was convinced he felt for him, induced the Marquis to be thus communicative, in hopes of gaining a strong friend in his uncle.

The Marechal listened to him with the most flattering attention, and when he ceased speaking, said,

" You may possibly be right in the suspicions you have formed, Alphonso ; " for I am convinced the Duke de Longueville will never think Alphonse de Cheylus a proper match for his heir ; but since your future happiness seems totally to depend upon being united to this lovely lady, for such she must be, if she answers your description of her—I
promise

promise you my strenuous support in the cause upon these conditions.—You are very young yet, and have seen but very little of the world; therefore, a twelvemonth hence will be time enough for you to think of marriage; and if, at the expiration of that time, you still retain the same sentiments in Mademoiselle de Cheylus's favour, and she has not disposed of her hand, to oblige her uncle or aunt, I promise you, I will do all in my power to obtain your father's consent to your marriage, and think I may venture to say he will not refuse me; for I can be very eloquent in a good cause, particularly when I am so nearly interested for the parties I plead for."

The Marquis hardly knew how to express his gratitude to his indulgent uncle, and readily promised to conform to his wishes in every thing, and to be totally guided by him in future.—He knew he had only to inform Alphonse of what had past, to insure her constancy, but that he did not know how to do at present; and delays, in such cases, are

sometimes dangerous ; for the Baron would certainly press her to marry, if he met with a suitable match for her ; so he longed more than ever to hear from his friend, the Countess, and determined to write to her in a few days, if he received no intelligence before.

The good old Marechal was very much interested in his nephew's felicity, but he wished to establish it upon a permanent basis. It was upon this account he proposed this long delay. If their love was sincere, this year of probation would add to the strength of it ; and if it was merely a sentiment of preference they felt in each others favour, which had been heightened by the opposition they had met with, absence, and the sight of other agreeable objects, might let them into the true state of their hearts, before it was too late.

Thus reasoned the amiable Marechal de Mercoeur, of whom it may be necessary to say a few words. He was near seventy, but
having

having always led a very regular life, he enjoyed an excellent state of health.—He was, as has been before said, universally respected and beloved.—To an excellent heart, he joined an uncommon understanding, and great natural parts, which had been cultivated by the first education the kingdom afforded. Being born a younger brother, he became very early in life a Knight of the Order of Malta, though men of his rank seldom pronounced their last vows 'till there was no chance of their being required to support the honour of their families by some splendid alliance; but his elder brother having married, and there being every prospect of his having an heir to his title and estates, the Chevalier d'Ormonville took his last vows, which condemned him to eternal celibacy at five and thirty; and before he was forty, he obtained the title of Commander, and the Great Cross.—But this did not preclude him from holding a post in the French service, and, by his talents and bravery, in due process of time, he obtained the most distin-

guished mark of the royal favour, namely, the Baton or Staff of a Marechal de France. He was always passionately fond of children, and had been particularly attached to his niece, the Marquis's mother, whom he early intended should be his heir.—The Duke, his brother, having no sons, only thought of forming some great alliance for this his only daughter, determined she should transmit one of the most illustrious names in the kingdom to her descendants; but love, all powerful love, too often disconcerts the exalted plans ambition forms, and did in the present instance.

The Prince de Montalban had three sons, the youngest of whom had become a member of the same order, distinguished the Commander d'Ormonville, and had attracted that amiable man's attention during his caravannes, who, finding him a very promising youth, grew very fond of him; and they often visited when they were at Paris.—This afforded the young Chevalier d'Oley
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the opportunity of often seeing the Commander's niece, the beautiful Mademoiselle de Mercoeur, and he soon began to think an union with such a woman would be far preferable to the life of celibacy he was upon the point of embracing; but what hopes could he entertain of such a desirable event ever taking place.—His father, who was then in the ministry, had, upon several occasions, unintentionally disoblged the Duke de Mercoeur, who resented so warmly these supposed affronts, that a total breach ensued between the two families.

Mademoiselle de Mercoeur might pretend to the first matches in France; and even his eldest brother, then Duke de Nemouris, and who would, in all probability, one day make her Princess de Montalban, would have had little or no chance of success, since this unfortunate quarrel between the two fathers;—therefore the Chevalier d'Oley had far less reason to flatter himself he should succeed, though every interview increased his passion

for the lovely niece of his amiable friend ;— but the Commander d'Ormonville had no authority over his niece, and but little influence with his brother ; still as his friendship for the Chevalier seemed to increase daily, he could not help flattering himself, that had he been the son of any other man, he would have undertaken to plead his cause to the Duke de Mercoeur ; and as hope, when cherished, is apt to increase, he at last thought it was possible the Commander might be induced to use his influence with the Duke, notwithstanding the numerous disadvantages he laboured under ; at all events, he could but make the trial, as he was convinced Mademoiselle de Mercoeur returned his ardent love : He therefore ventured, one morning he happened to find the Commander alone, to mention his unfortunate passion, and touched slightly upon the hopes he entertained, from the friendship he had always professed for him.

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The amiable man he addressed listened to him with the utmost complacency; and when he ceased speaking, said,

“ You already seem to know, my young friend, what little hopes you have of success. However, you may depend upon my doing all in my power to serve you, though I would not have you flatter yourself you will reap any great benefit from my mediation.”

The Chevalier, who thought he had overcome a very great difficulty, thanked his kind friend, and left him, trusting wholly to his eloquence, to bring the Duke de Mercœur into his way of thinking.

But this was by no means an easy task;—and the Commander entered upon the subject with his brother, more from a wish to acquit the promise he had made the Chevalier, than from any hopes he entertained of succeeding in his embassy.—The Prince de Montalban, unlike the generality of French

fathers, whose affection and hopes commonly center in the heir to their titles and estates, was remarkably fond of the Chevalier, and would have done every thing in his power to contribute to his felicity. The Commander was very intimate with him, notwithstanding the more than coolness that subsisted between him and his brother, was therefore perfectly acquainted with his sentiments, and knew he would consent to any reasonable propositions the Duke de Mercoeur might make. This idea rather encouraged him, and he painted the mutual love his niece and the Chevalier felt for each other, in the most glowing colours, and said, all his partiality to both inspired him with, to bring the Duke de Mercoeur to consent to their happiness ; but finding his Grace seemed inclined to take some time for reflection, he was fearful he should injure the cause of those he meant to serve, if he pressed him too strenuously upon the subject—so he left him, telling him he should pay him another visit in the course of a few days, when he hoped he would favour him
with

with his final determination ; he would then come with full power from the Prince de Montalban, and hoped he would not let pique have any weight with him in a matter of such importance, and upon which his daughter's future happiness so much depended.

He next waited upon the Prince, as the Chevalier had entreated he would also be his mediator with him, not having yet ventured to let this most indulgent of parents into the secret of his heart.

The Prince, though sorry in some respects, his son had placed his affections upon a woman whose father would think it a great act of condescension to accept of his offers, and who was still more likely absolutely to refuse his consent to such an alliance, gave the Commander full power to treat in his name, and offered to do all he could for his son, being very willing to consign all that had passed between him and the Duke to oblivion.

vion.—The next time, therefore, the Commander saw his brother, he frankly mentioned all that had passed between the Prince and him, and added every argument he thought capable of inducing the Duke to treat such generous proposals as they deserved. The Duke's answer was very laconic.

“It was not in his principles to oblige his greatest enemy.”

The Commander, well acquainted with the inveterate obstinacy of his brother, knew it would be in vain to attempt to argue him out of the illiberal prejudice he entertained against the Prince de Montalban, took his leave excessively angry with the Duke, and very sorry for the young people, who must relinquish all the hopes the seeming irresolution of his Grace had inspired them with.—Much about this time, the Duke de Longueville made his first offer, which was rejected with disdain, as has been already mentioned.

Notwithstanding

Notwithstanding what has passed, the Chevalier d'Oley, and Mademoiselle de Mercoeur, often met as before, at the Commander's, who, in spite of the absolute refusal his application had met with, still flattered himself his brother would reflect upon the past, and consent at last to an union, upon which his only child's felicity depended.—He was of so open and forgiving a disposition himself, that he could not suppose a brother of his could persist in his obstinacy, though he had often had proofs of the implacability of his disposition.

Thus matters went on for near six months. The Commander was the mutual confident of the lovers, and they all three formed the greatest expectations upon the Duke's silence, and the passive consent he seemed to give to their frequent interviews; but at the end of this period, the Chevalier d'Oley suddenly left Paris, without any of his friends knowing why, or wherefore, or where he was gone.

The Prince being, as has been remarked, excessively fond of this son, grew very uneasy; as he was in the ministry, he must have known, had he been confined in consequence of a letter de Cachet: Besides, he was confident he had nothing to fear upon that subject; and had he been assassinated by any secret enemy, he should have heard of it from the Lieutenant of the Police: He was therefore excessively puzzled and perplexed how to act, but in his quality of minister, he caused the most exact researches to be made in and round the capital, which all proved fruitless: At last his suspicions fell upon the Duke de Mercoeur, whom he could not help thinking was at the bottom of this strange affair.

The Chevalier's passion for his fair daughter had been discussed in all the first circles, and this had certainly prevented the Duke from forming any of those brilliant alliances he had long been so ambitious of;—and the Prince having lost all patience, and
not

not being able to discover the slightest trace of his son, waited upon his Grace, and openly accused him of being concerned in this iniquitous business.—The Duke, who felt himself highly piqued, dared the Prince to prove the charge he had brought against him.—As this was not in the Prince's power, he was obliged to drop the affair, though by no means convinced of the Duke's innocence; but having no absolute proofs of his being privy to his son's extraordinary disappearance, he could have no redress.

The Duke de Longueville seized this propitious moment to make his second offer through a very powerful channel, and it was instantly accepted; because the Duke de Mercoeur knew such a step would particularly hurt the Prince de Montalban, who was seriously interested in his son's happiness, and this was depriving him at once of all hopes of ever obtaining his daughter's hand; he therefore forced the lovely victim of his ill-grounded

grounded prejudices to accompany the Duke de Longueville to the altar.

The Commander d'Ormonville, deeply hurt by his brother's cruel proceedings, retired to his commandery, which he never quitted 'till the birth of the present Marquis, whom he flew to see; and his natural fondness for children got the better of the antipathy he felt for the Duke de Longueville.

During all this time, not the slightest trace had been discovered of the Chevalier d'Oley. Had he met with any accident, or in short had he lost his life, every one, who were interested in his fate, thought they should have gained some tidings of him, as very large rewards were offered to any one who should bring news of him, or could make any discoveries concerning his fate: But the only favourable conjecture his friends could form, if so it might be termed, was, that he had been spirited away by some secret enemy, and the Prince still retained his first suspicion

cion as to the person ; but having no further proofs, he was still equally without redress, and could only hope time would discover the reason of his son's mysterious absence.

The subsequent loss of the young Marquis again estranged the Commander from his family.—The birth of his brother by no means consoled him for the deprivation of his little favourite, and his dislike for the Duke de Longueville, seemed to have increased.

It was during the course of the following twenty years, that he attained all his present honours, and became, as has been related, heir to his vindictive brother. The restoration of this child of his affection added greatly to his felicity, and he determined never to lose sight of him, if he could possibly avoid it for the time to come, though it was very uncertain whether the Duke de Longueville would allow his only son to reside constantly with so comparatively a distant relation, or
how

how far the young man himself might be inclined to oblige him.

But to return to the Prince de Montalban's family.—The same mystery still enveloped the Chevalier d'Oley's fate, and the Prince had since had the misfortune to lose his two other sons, one in the service.—The other owed his death to a putrid fever. They both died unmarried, which added greatly to the Prince's regret, though his natural excellent disposition, and innate goodness, induced him to bear these repeated losses with fortitude and resignation.—He totally secluded himself from the great world, and constantly resided at an ancient seat he possessed near Avalon, in Burgundy, where he disposed of his immense income in charitable and munificent actions.

His greatest friend, and when in France his most constant visitor, was the Marechal de Mercoeur, and it was to his seat the Marechal first bent his steps, meaning to spend a week

or

or ten days with his best friend, before he proceeded to his own Castle.

He imparted his intentions to the Marquis soon after they left Paris; mentioned the Prince and Princess, who were still living, as a most amiable couple, but who had been peculiarly unfortunate, informing him how they had lost their three sons, without mentioning the Chevalier's love for his mother, nor whom they suspected had had him conveyed from Paris.

"Good Heavens!" said the Marquis;—"how truly unfortunate.—I almost wonder the Prince and Princess survived such repeated losses; but their youngest son must have been murdered, or his retreat would certainly have been discovered ere this.—Was no one suspected, my dear uncle, of being accessory to so strange an adventure?"

"One person, who is since dead, was strongly supposed to have been concerned in this
iniquitous

iniquitous business," said the Marechal;—"with what justice, God only knows; for no proofs could be brought home to any one.—However, if the Chevalier still lives, time may discover this hitherto impenetrable mystery."

C H A P. VII.

THE travellers arrived at Lucy le Bois, a very neat village in Burgundy, early in the afternoon of the fourth day of their journey. The Castle of Sauvigny was a league and a half beyond; but as the Prince and Princess were both very infirm, and saw very little company of late years, the Marechal told his nephew he would go forwards alone,

alone, for fear it might not prove agreeable to them to receive a stranger, though so nearly related to him, that evening; and he should be guided by circumstances, that he would either return in the course of a couple of hours, and they would pursue their journey in the morning, or he would send a carriage for him as soon as he had prepared the Prince for his reception, for having lost his youngest son, though at a much later period, in a manner something similar to the strange way in which he was conveyed from the Castle of Longueville.—Happy as he knew the Prince and Princess would both be to see the nephew, whose loss they had often consoled with him upon, still his appearance, and particularly if he was to be introduced to them abruptly, might remind them too strongly of their past afflictions.

The Marquis was perfectly of his uncle's way of thinking; therefore entreated he would not be uneasy upon his account; he would wait his pleasure at Lucy le Bois, or
would

would go forward solus to the Castle of Mercœur, but entreated he would not shorten his visit to his amiable friends, because he was with him, and thought it might be as prudent not to mention his name to them ; he therefore merely entreated his uncle would give him his orders, which he would conform to in every respect.

“ You are very obliging, my dear Alphonso,” said the Marechal ; “ but if my good friends can bear your presence, I shall be too proud of introducing you, to lose so excellent an opportunity ; so let me entreat you would amuse yourself as well as you can, ’till you either see or hear from me, and you may depend upon doing one or the other before eight o’clock.”

“ These beautiful environs will afford me ample subject for contemplation, ’till I have that advantage,” said the Marquis.

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The Marechal, therefore, went forward immediately, and the Marquis strolled about, and viewed, with the greatest admiration, the fine cultivated hills and valleys of that delightful province, and the vineyards which were now in full blossom.—What a different scene was this to what he had been accustomed to.—This truly appeared like the land of milk and honey, after the environs of Wielbourg, and that part of Brabant and Flanders he had seen.—He rambled about in sight of the village and road leading to Sauvigny 'till near sun-set, when he saw a carriage advancing very fast, which came apparently from thence.—It was, as he guessed, one of the Princes come to fetch him;—he therefore returned to the post-house, which he reached a few minutes after the arrival of the carriage, and set out immediately, but did not reach the Castle 'till dusk, therefore did not see the surrounding prospects to advantage.—Though he was delighted with this part of the country, he had a taste for Gothic buildings, and they always reminded him

him of the Castle of Wielbourg; but this house seemed infinitely more spacious, and was fitted up in a style nearly similar to the Hotel de Longueville.—He traversed several apartments before he reached a superb saloon, where he found his uncle, a gentleman who seemed his senior by some years, and a lady much about the Marechal's age.—They both arose the moment he entered the room, and advanced to welcome him —They had both been, nay, were still very much affected, tho' they tried to conceal their emotion when they stopped short within a few paces of the Marquis, and each fixed their eyes upon him with a sort of eager anxiety, and their looks seemed to say it was at your age we lost our dear favourite son, but we have not been so fortunate as to have him thus restored. The Marechal had told the Marquis the Chevalier was much such a figure as he was, and as he had foreseen they were evidently very much struck with his appearance, this amiable man now advanced, and taking his nephew by the hand, led him forward, saying,

“ I told you, my Alphonso, my best friends would be affected when they saw you. I knew whom your presence would remind them of, though I prepared them for your appearance, and have given them the heads of your story.”

He then introduced him to the Princess. She presented him her hand, and said, in a faltering voice,

“ Welcome, welcome, to Sauvigny, my dear young friend.—How happy has your being thus restored to your family made the good Marechal.”—A deep sigh escaped her, as she concluded.

The Marquis raised the hand she had given him to his lips, but was too much affected by the good lady's evident sorrow, to answer her polite speech as he could have wished. The Prince had got close to the Marechal, and having looked at the Marquis very stedfastly, while

while the Princess was addressing him, he exclaimed,

“Oh ! my friend, I could almost fancy this was my long-lost ——.”

The Marechal cut his phrase, by saying, “My good friend, allow me to introduce my nephew, the Marquis de St. Cernin, to your notice.”

The Prince, unable any longer to conceal his emotion, instead of answering the Marechal, flung his arms round the Marquis, and the tears ran down his aged cheeks in silence for some seconds, before he slackened his embrace, or was able to utter a single word.

The Marquis had been prepared, in a great measure, by his uncle, or he would have thought this a very strange reception, though it was, in some respects, a very flattering one ; and he felt himself excessively interested in the sorrows of the aged couple,
and

and wished very much it had been in his power to have alleviated their sorrows, and almost blamed his uncle for having thus brought him to renew their grief.

As soon as the Prince was rather recovered, he welcomed the Marquis in the most friendly manner to the Castle, and congratulated him upon his good fortune, in having fallen into such excellent hands, when he was torn from the embraces of his parents, and upon his happy restoration to his family, only wished Heaven might have such a blessing in store for him.

The Marquis joined very fervently in the wish, and they all took their seats.—The young Man's presence seemed to afford this amiable couple a sort of melancholy consolation, and they vied with each other in trying to convince him how happy they were to see him.

The discourse rolled upon general subjects 'till supper.—The Marechal gave them a short account of his embassy, and soon after their meal, knowing his amiable friends always retired early, the Marechal complained of fatigue; the Prince would accompany both his old friend and his young one, he said, to their respective apartments, which were upon the same floor, in one of the wings of this extensive building, and there the Prince took a more affectionate leave of the Marquis than ever the Duke de Longueville had done, at least so the young man thought.

END OF VOL. I,



